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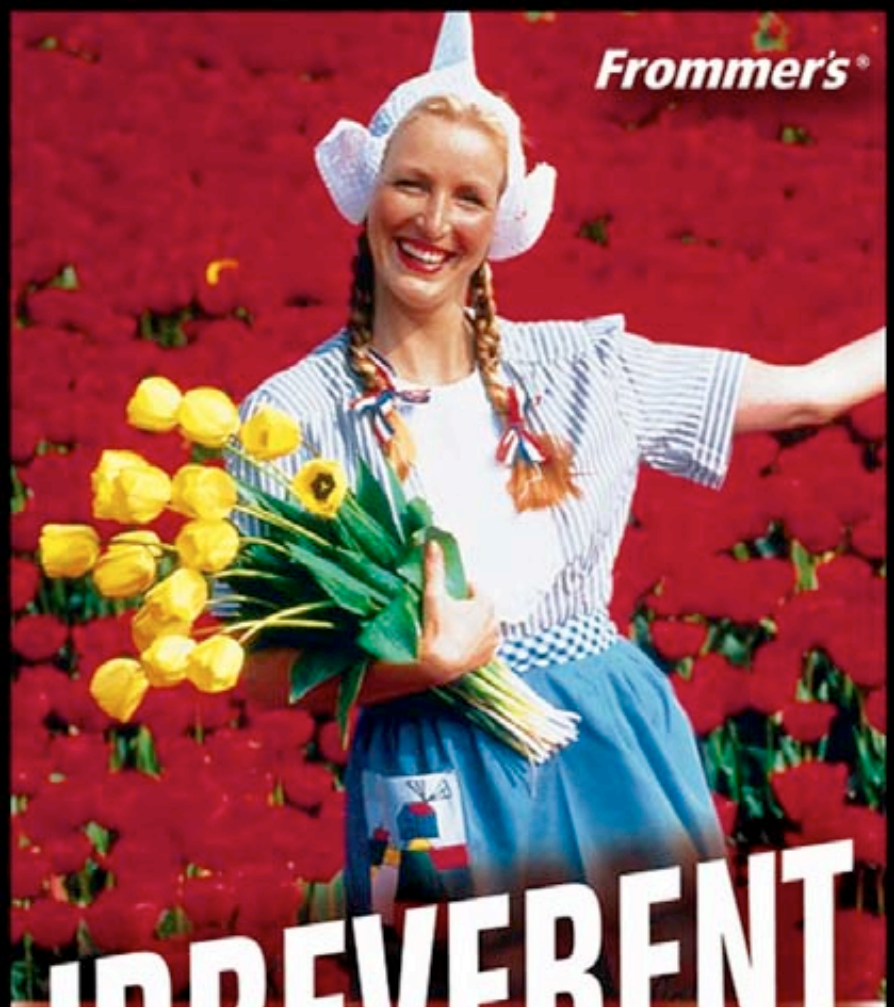

IRREVERENT guide to Amsterdam

fifth edition

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Frommer's

IRREVERENT guide to Amsterdam

5th Edition

By
George McDonald

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Map 1 Amsterdam Neighborhoods 2

YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW 10

How to tolerate the Dutch sense of tolerance (10) • How to swallow a fish like the locals (11) • How to avoid becoming a crime statistic (11) • What those pesky suffixes mean (13) • How to define the indefinable gezellig *(13) • How to enjoy your hash and grass without being arrested (13) • What the Jamaican flag really stands for (14) • When smoke gets in your eyes (14) • How to ride—and not lose—a Dutch bike (15) • Pickpockets (15) • Biking in Amsterdam (16) • Bike thieves are legion (16) • How to whiz around town (17) • How to avoid being eaten alive by mosquitoes in summer (18) • How to ice-skate like the locals (19) • How to order and drink Dutch* jenever *(gin) (19) • Lost Art? (19) • How to navigate the gay capital of Europe (20) • What passes for an age of consent (21) • Don't Go (21) • How to greet (or take leave of) an Amsterdammer (21)*

1 ACCOMMODATIONS 22

Basic Stuff 26

Winning the Reservations Game 27

Is There a Right Address in Amsterdam? 28

The Lowdown 30

In search of canal-house coziness (30) • For tourists who want clogs, windmills, and tulips (32) • For enemies of clogs, windmills, and tulips (32) • The grande dames (33) • In search of the indefinable

gezelligheid *(34)* • *Taking care of business (35)* • *For travelers with old money (35)* • *For travelers with new money (36)* • *Dowdy but lovable (37)* • *For those who hate surprises (38)* • *Luscious love nests (38)* • *Rooms with a view (39)* • *Home away from home (40)* • *Convention hotels with flair (40)* • *To relive the Golden Age (40)* • *In search of the perfect pool (41)* • *The royal treatment (41)* • *For cheap sleeps (42)* • *Lavender lodgings (43)* • *Party scenes (43)* • *Family values (44)* • *When you've got a plane to catch (45)* • *When everything else is filled (45)*

Maps

Map 2 Amsterdam Accommodations 24
Map 3 Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Accommodations 46
Map 4 Southern Amsterdam (Museum District & Old South) Accommodations 48
Map 5 Eastern Amsterdam Accommodations 50

The Index 51

An A to Z list of places to stay, with vital statistics

2 DINING & CAFES 60

Basic Stuff 64

Only in Amsterdam 64
Van Dam vs. Iens 65
Cafe Society 66
Still Holland's Best Ice Cream 67
Tap Houses 68
How to Dress 68
When to Eat 68
Getting the Right Table 69
Celebrity Chefs 69

The Lowdown 70

Restaurants 70
Going Dutch (70) • *Dutch on the run (71)* • *Real* rijsttafel *(72)* • *Mumbai on the Amstel (72)* • *Thai me up (73)* • *Asian delights (73)* • *Utopian Ethiopian (74)* • *Multi Mediterranean (74)* • *The French connection (75)* • *For that special moment (76)* • *Overrated (77)* • *See-and-be-scenes (78)* • *Landmarks (79)* • *Cheap eats (80)* • *Isn't it romantic? (80)* • *Tourist traps (81)* • *Something fishy (82)* • *Can you put that out, please? (82)* • *When the play's the thing (83)* • *Kid pleasers (83)* • *For a quiet tête-à-tête (84)* • *Vegging out (84)* • *When the boss is paying (85)* • *Alfresco (86)* • *Take me to the river (86)*
Cafes 87
Vintage brown cafes (87) • *Neobrowns (88)* • *White cafes (88)* • *Designer cafes (88)* • *Best cafe food (89)*

Maps

Map 6 Amsterdam Dining & Cafes 62

Map 7 Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Museum District, Red-Light District, Rembrandtplein & Waterlooplein) Dining & Cafes 90

Map 8 Southern Amsterdam (Museum District & Vondelpark) Dining & Cafes 92

Map 9 Eastern Amsterdam (East & Eastern Docks) Dining & Cafes 94

The Index **95**

An A to Z list of restaurants and cafes, with vital statistics

3 DIVERSIONS **106**

Basic Stuff **110**

Getting Your Bearings 111

King of the Culture Vultures 112

The City of the 7,000 Gables 112

The Lowdown **113**

Where the tourists go (113) • Don't believe the brochures (114) • For culture vultures (115) • Picture perfect (117) • Courting privacy (117) • Ladies with a past (118) • Looking down on it all (118) • Lifestyles of the rich and deceased (119) • Okay, if you've gotta see windmills (121) • For history buffs (121) • Moments in time (123) • Sacred sights (124) • Turrets syndrome (125) • Biking on the Water (126) • Catching the Museum Boat (127) • Row, row, row your boat (127) • Diamonds in the rough (128) • Sex, drugs, and torture museums (129) • Museums that won't bore the kids (129) • More kidding around (130) • Biking in Amsterdam (130) • People-watching (131) • Behind the eight ball (132) • Chess cafes (132) • Where to escape the crowds (133) • Art Nouveau to go (134) • When you're down to your last euro (134) • The Red-Light District (136) • The old Jewish Quarter (137) • Hofje-*hopping in the Jordaan (137) • The Grachtengordel mansions (138) • A Singel–minded stroll (139) • Haarlem days (139)*

Maps

Map 10 Amsterdam Diversions 108

Map 11 Eastern Amsterdam (East, Eastern Docks & Jewish Quarter) Diversions 141

Map 12 Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Diversions 142

Map 13 Southern Amsterdam (Amsterdamsebos, Museum District, Old South & Vondelpark) Diversions 144

The Index **146**

An A to Z list of diversions, with vital statistics

4 GETTING OUTSIDE 158

The Lowdown 160

Green spaces (160) • Two-wheeling it (161) • Cycling beyond the city limits (162) • Island hopping (164) • Pedaling and paddling on the water (165) • Horsing around (165) • The squash and tennis racket (166) • Jogging and pickup sports (167) • On ice (167) • In the swim (167) • Tiptoeing through the tulips (168) • The windmills of your mind (169)

5 SHOPPING 170

Basic Stuff 174

What to Buy 174
Target Zones 175
The Spirit of Amsterdam: Distiller Cees van Wees 175
Outdoor Markets 175
Bargain Hunting 177
Trading with the Natives 177
Hours of Business 178
Sales Tax 178

The Lowdown 178

Budding prospects (178) • Where you'll be pampered (179) • Everything under one roof (180) • Diamonds are a girl's best friend (180) • Club gear (181) • Royal fashions (181) • Wacky and one-of-a-kind (182) • Bags and beans (183) • Fashion forward (184) • Everything you always wanted to know about sex (184) • For foot fetishists (185) • Home designs (185) • The art scene (185) • Very old things (186) • Kid stuff (187) • Incredible edibles (187) • Smokes (188) • Book nooks (188) • Clogs, china, and kitsch (189)

Maps

Map 14 Amsterdam Shopping 172
Map 15 Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jewish Quarter, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Shopping 190
Map 16 Southern Amsterdam (Museum District, Old South & Vondelpark) Shopping 192

The Index 194

An A to Z list of places to shop, with vital statistics

6 NIGHTLIFE 206

Basic Stuff 210

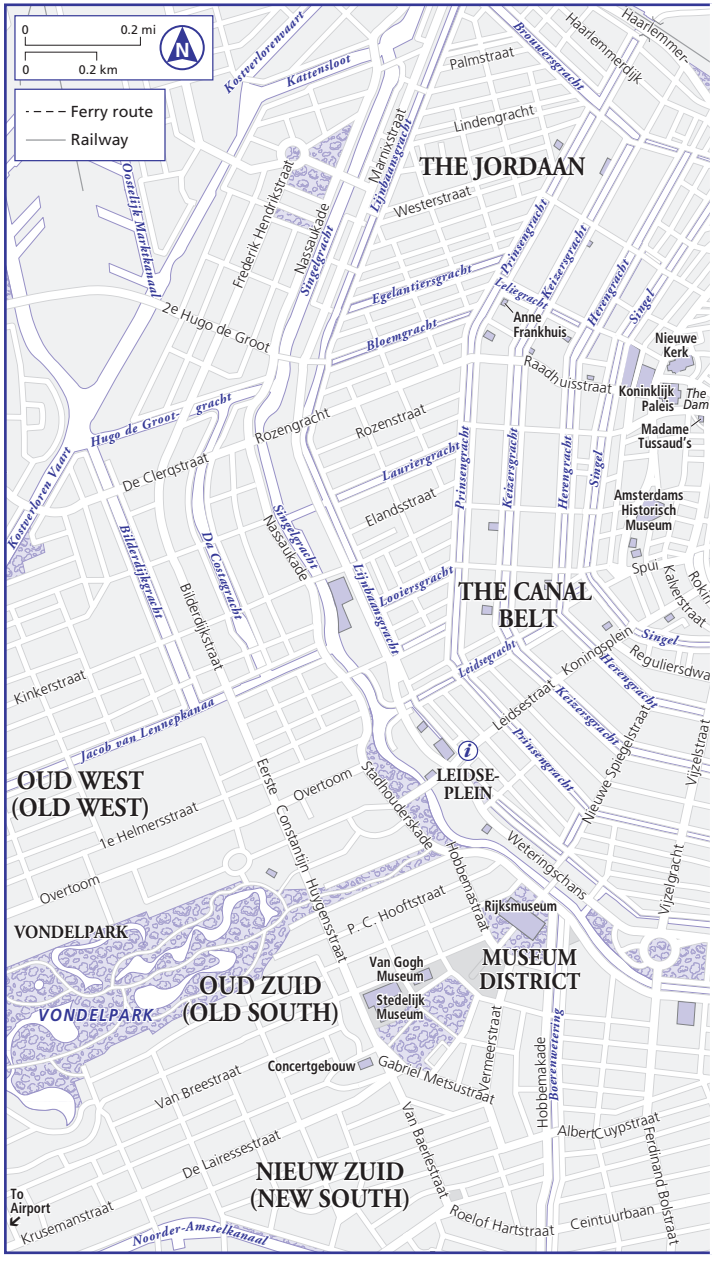
House of Ill Repute with a Great Reputation 211
Smoke Houses 211
Sources 212

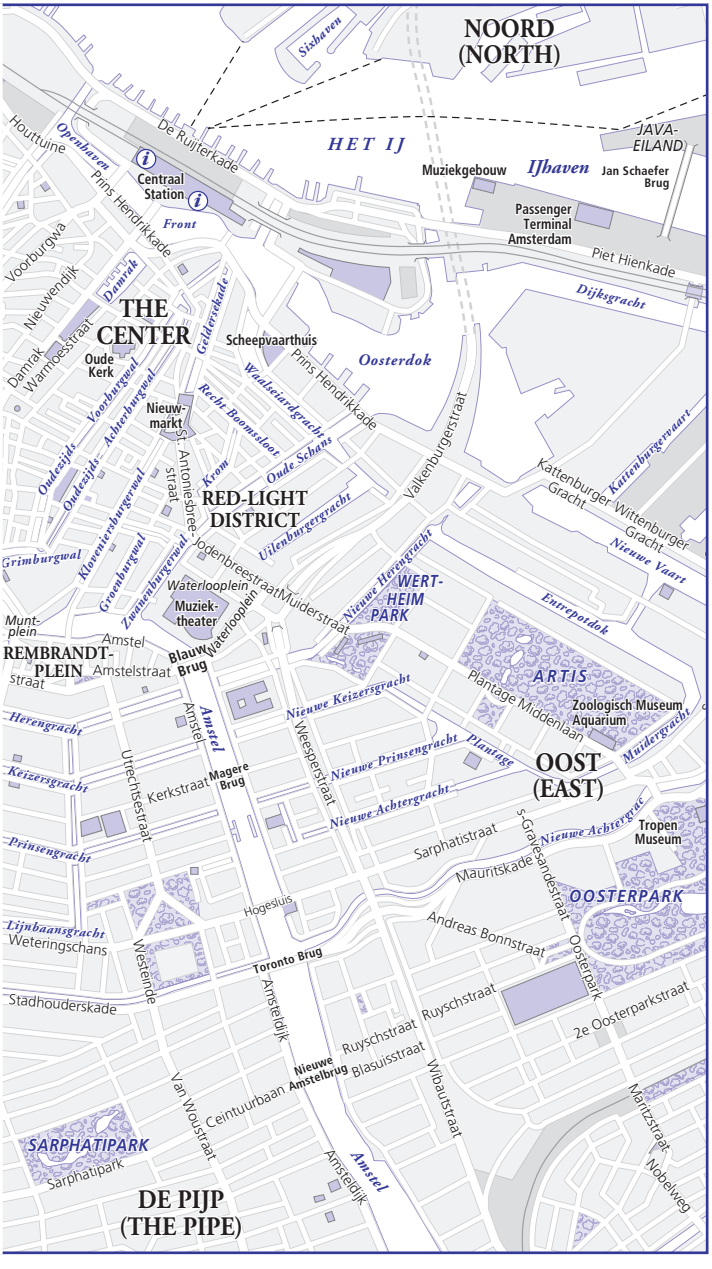
INTRODUCTION

Wonderful, wild, too-good-to-be-true Amsterdam and its sometimes self-consciously cool, cultivated denizens lend themselves to tongue-in-cheek treatment. Few Europeans are so forthright, so ready to make fun of themselves, their history, language, and customs as the inhabitants of this small, flat, watery capital of a small, flat, watery country. "Our hearts are on our tongues," goes an old Amsterdam saying. So much for the stereotype of the dour Dutch: Amsterdammers are disarmingly friendly, fun—and irreverent.

In fact, the Dutch as such do not exist; the Netherlands is a collection of provinces with distinct personalities (such as Friesland, one of the country's 12 provinces, which fancies itself to be distinct from the rest of the country). Amsterdammers are as different from their countrymen as a Scotsman is from a Londoner, or a Milanese from a Sicilian. The governmental capital, The Hague, is stiff and conservative; Rotterdam, home of the world's busiest port, is industrial and hard-edged; Maastricht, in the Catholic south, is elegant as well as exuberant. Amsterdam, the symbolic capital, where Dutch figurehead monarchs from the House of Orange have been inaugurated (Dutch monarchs aren't uppity enough to be crowned) since 1813, is casual and liberal, with an anything-goes spirit. Stunningly well preserved—though plenty grimy in places, and speckled with what is something of a local specialty: dog shit—Amsterdam revolves around tourism, conventions, and high tech, with Schiphol Airport the

Map 1: Amsterdam Neighborhoods




NOORD
(NORTH)
Sixhaven
HET IJ
JAVA-
EILAND
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer
Brug
Passenger
Terminal
Amsterdam
Piet Hienkade
Dijksgracht
De Ruijterkade
Houttuine
Openhaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Centraal
Station
Front
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
THE
CENTER
Oude
Kerk
Warmoesstraat
Gelderskade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Prins Hendrikkade
Waalseilandsgracht
Recht Boomssloot
Nieuw-
markt
Oudezijds
Achterburgwal
Oudezijds
Voorburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Krom
Oude Schans
RED-LIGHT
DISTRICT
Vijzelstraat
Valkenburgerstraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburger
Gracht
Wittenburger
Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
Uilenburgergracht
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgwal
Jodenbreestraat
Waterlooplein
Muziek-
theater
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-
HEIM
PARK
Entrepotdok
Munt-
plein
REMBRANDT-
PLEIN
Amstel
Amstelstraat
Blauwbrug
Waterlooplein
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum
Aquarium
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Herengracht
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Amstel
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere
Brug
Wesperstraat
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Plantage
Muidergracht
OOST
(EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Sarphatistraat
s-Gravesandestraat
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Tropen
Museum
Mauritskade
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
Andreas Bonnstraat
Oosterpark
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westerdok
Toronto Brug
Stadhouderskade
Amstelblijk
Ruyschstraat
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
Nieuwe
Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
Marnixstraat
Nobelweg
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amstelblijk
DE PIJP
(THE PIPE)

city's second-largest employer. The biggest employer is the seemingly recession-proof government, whose tolerant quality-of-life policies help make this city so livable and so loved, even by visitors who detest big government.

Like Florence, Amsterdam is a city of art. Truth be told, only half a dozen of its 42 dynamic and ever-expanding museums are world-class: the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Stedelijk Museum, Rembrandt House Museum, Amsterdam Historical Museum, and Maritime Museum—still an impressive roster for a cosmopolis of just 750,000 souls, a city so compact you can stroll across it in a couple of hours. Within the Centrum alone—the center-city bounded by the 19th-century Singelgracht canal—are 6,800 centuries-old canal houses (which gives the old center of Amsterdam its timeless character) that are historical monuments, many of them dating from the city's 17th-century Golden Age squeezed into a semicircle that you can easily amble across in an hour. Their bricks stand balanced on wooden pilings driven through the mud into more-or-less solid ground, constantly reminding people of the city's precarious situation below sea level.

Though most locals are proud of their showcase city, which has modernized while maintaining its monuments, they manage to poke fun at its founding. There is no illustrious Roman pedigree ("Here a wretched race is found," noted Pliny the Elder, "inhabiting either the more elevated spots or artificial mounds" where no Romans in their right minds would set foot); there's not even a lost Viking to pep up the history books. The whole thing started, it seems, when some fishermen and their dogs drifted down the Amstel River sometime in the early 1200s. (The city's original coat of arms depicts the founding tale of two fishermen and a dog arriving onboard a small boat.) They slogged up a muddy bank and had a stiff drink (the fishermen, that is), thus laying the foundations of a tavern around which the entire metropolis would grow.

And grow it did: Bright, beaverlike fishermen dammed the river (doubtless they damned it too, on occasion), thereby reclaiming huge quantities of mud, at what is today the square called the Dam. Their brilliant, inspired, and imaginative name for their settlement? Amstellodam (or Amstelledamme), which means Dam on the Amstel River. Archaeological remains show that by 1204, local big wheels were moving in on what the peasants had created. The lord of Aemstel, Gijsbrecht II, made the first power play, building a castle at the settlement and lording it over the locals. (In the 1990s, archaeologists uncovered

the foundations of the castle under a tiny side street called Nieuwezijds Kolk.) But Gijsbrecht had to watch his back constantly, as others began maneuvering for position. In 1275, Count Floris V of Holland, the local big wheel, granted this previously unknown fishing village special trading privileges. Count Gijsbrecht IV of Aemstel resented Floris's efforts to win friends and influence people on his patch, and in 1296 he murdered Floris in his castle at Muiden.

Gijsbrecht didn't have long to enjoy his victory. Two years later Floris's brother, Guy of Hainaut, defeated Gijsbrecht in battle and hauled him up in front of the bishop of Utrecht for judgment; Gijsbrecht's land was confiscated and he was imprisoned and later exiled. In 1300, the bishop granted Amstelledamme its town charter and in 1317 ceded the town to the counts of Holland.

Things really got going in Amstellodam when the founding fathers and their dog were joined by a few founding mothers bearing *jenever* (gin) and salted herrings. The humble herring was responsible for the city's early prosperity: Local fishermen knew how to catch, preserve, and market it better than anyone else in Europe. Tobacco arrived a few centuries later, and soon the institution of the tobacco-stained, fly-blown *Bruine Kroeg*—better known as the brown cafe—was born. Brown cafes worth their stains haven't been washed or painted since—thus their name—and are marvelous time tunnels to the Golden Age of Rembrandt's Amsterdam, since these places have been haunts of *every* Amsterdam generation since the Golden Age. This includes during the hippie heyday of the 1960s, which was apparently a kind of alternative Golden Age for the city, though the hippie scene is now as dead and buried as Count Floris V.

The talents and resources of the early immigrants fueled everything from diamond polishing (still an important industry) to shipbuilding and international trade. The 1602 creation of the United East India Company (V.O.C.) by natives and immigrants ushered in the so-called Golden Age of the 17th century, when Amsterdam briefly reigned as Europe's most populous and powerful city. As the company's headquarters, Amsterdam in effect ruled a vast commercial empire, with satellites in South Africa, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Goa, and China. As the company grew embarrassingly rich, so too did Amsterdam. Today, the East India Company is reviled by young Amsterdammers guilty about their checkered colonial past, but like it or not, the corporation helped make Amsterdam the

handsome, prosperous, cosmopolitan capital it is today. It also helped create the city's signature Red-Light District: Practical-minded city governors saw this bawdy-house district as the best means to prevent sailors from molesting the wives and daughters of locals (and it helped that it also generated considerable income, as it still does today).

During its heyday in the 17th century, the city burst through its medieval corset of walls and spilled outward in concentric semicircles; the Grachtengordel—literally, the "girdle of canals"—was built to handle this midriff bulge. First came the grandest canal of all, the Herengracht, whose Golden Bend (between Leidsestraat and Vijzelstraat) sprouted scores of mansions. The slightly less grand Keizersgracht followed, then the notably less grand Prinsengracht. The word "Grachtengordel" came to signify both the canals (a noun) and the fat-cat society living there (an adjective); it still does. Along these picturesque arteries, thousands of opulent palaces, churches, and public buildings sprang up. Miraculously, most are still there, and some members of the same merchant-prince dynasties—notably the Six family—still live in them.

At the same time, beyond the Grachtengordel to the northwest, the helter-skelter Jordaan neighborhood grew, its name a corruption of the French *jardin* (garden), left behind by Protestant French Huguenots, refugees from Catholic persecution back home (though today the district isn't a garden at all, but it does contain some handsome small gardens). Another Frenchie, Napoléon Bonaparte, later forced the Amsterdammers to name and number their canals and streets, thus making obsolete the city's endearing gablestones. The gablestones, of which some examples survive, were sculptures or tiles that depicted a picture-book bas-relief image relating to the trade or profession of the householders. These had been used instead of street numbers—which made it difficult to find one's way around unless you were in the know, which must have been infuriating to a control freak like the little Corsican. Poetically, the Jordaan's urban garden—its streets and canals—bears the names of flowers: Rozengracht, Egelantiersgracht, Bloemstraat, and so on. Unless you're an architecture buff, the rest of the city is beautiful but unremarkable—counterclockwise, the Old West, Old South, New South, and East quarters, all added in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Amsterdam may look like a museum, but it lives in the present like no other European city. The economy boomed during the mid- to late 1990s but took a substantial knock from the

fallout of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and the subsequent economic downturn put Holland officially in recession by 2003. Still, expansion on other fronts continues apace: A major focus of ongoing redevelopment work is the old harbor area fronting the IJ channel, and farther out to the east at IJburg on the IJmeer lakefront, where new residential and infrastructure projects are sprouting like tulips in springtime. It also seems likely that water transportation will be increasingly important in the future, as the Passenger Terminal Amsterdam, a new cruise-ship port facility, is handling an increasing number of seagoing visitors.

Furthermore, Amsterdam deserves its reputation as both the sex and drugs, if not rock 'n' roll, capital of the Continent, as well as Europe's gay capital, thanks again to the centuries-old tradition of tolerance (homosexuality has been legal here for almost 200 years) and a natural bent for commerce. You can smoke small quantities of hash and marijuana, or nibble magic mushrooms, in some 250 "smoking coffee shops"; prostitution is legal so long as services are performed in registered whorehouses (prostitutes are covered by social security and have their own labor union). The number of cafes—many exquisitely cozy, others wild and woolly—boggles the mind. Experimental music, dance, and theater flourish. Streets are animated and most of them are amazingly safe day and night because people live, work, and play all over town instead of scurrying to the suburbs when darkness falls. The presence of two large universities explains only in part the number of young people living here. In fact, Amsterdam is a talent magnet, drawing ambitious artists and businesspeople from all over Europe. Environmental consciousness is high, too (particularly if the problem is not in Amsterdam's backyard): It's no coincidence that Greenpeace International—a fine-tuned Dutch business with a multimillion-dollar budget—is based here.

Sound like paradise? Well, sort of. The ironic old Dutch saying, "Everything is possible, but you're not supposed to enjoy it," seems hopelessly dated today. Modern Amsterdammers seem untouched by Calvinism. The cliché about a Calvinistic obsession with cleanliness is patently false, too: The city's two liveliest squares, Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein, are often pigsties. And don't be surprised if the tabletop at your favorite cafe or restaurant is sticky with spilled beer. Amsterdam's weather is abysmal—consistently rainy and often cold—and prices continue to climb. Toleration of soft drug use may sound enlightened; unfortunately, many smoking coffee shops and

magic mushroom shops are dives controlled by organized crime. Environmental consciousness? Yes, car traffic is limited; the air (outside) is clean. But locals smoke like chimneys; most cafes, restaurants, and clubs are blue with pollution, and nonsmoking sections are still not respected. Because it is legal here, prostitution is refreshingly unhypocritical as it eliminates pimps and keeps prostitutes off the streets.

But the architecturally stunning Red-Light District is shabby in some parts, and, in the opinion of many conservatives, the whole place is pretty squalid—a contemporary Sodom and Gomorrah.... Imagine a place that's wall to wall with barely clad prostitutes cavorting behind red-fringed windows, many of them (the hookers, that is) hailing from Eastern Europe and Third World nations, and who just conceivably might not be doing this as their preferred career choice; where brain-dead junkies and sad-looking heroin whores flop around, gazing out on their world through vacant eyes; where what constitutes a night out at the theater is crowds of fired-up drunk guys ogling stage artists inserting bananas into their vaginas or going at it doggy-style in "live shows"; where pimps, dope dealers, pickpockets, muggers, and all kind of weird folks are legion; where leather is the apparel fabric of choice; where the titles in literature stores cover the gamut of sexual obsessions and fetishes—sex with minors, sex with animals, gang bangs, rape, and more; where sex-appliance stores stock everything from the mildly titillating to the physically dubious, to the positively anxiety-inducing; where "You want a blow job?" is on its way to becoming a traditional greeting. While it's not necessarily somewhere you'd want to take your maiden aunt—though, who knows, maybe she'd be keen to go along—the astonishing thing is that this isn't the whole story: Real people live here, walk the dog, buy their groceries, take the kids to school, visit bookshops, drink in decent bars, and eat in decent restaurants. And most of the tourists are just strolling around in search of a laugh and a giggle.

The local strain of tolerance does not mean loving acceptance, either. While most Amsterdammers are cosmopolitan and curious, plenty are bigots. Citizens of ex-colonial origin—Indonesians, Surinamese, black Africans—sometimes say the Singelgracht is really a moat designed to keep them out. Central Amsterdam may be beautiful, clean, and safe, but suburbs like Bijlmermeer—80% immigrant—are seedy and dangerous. The opposite of white flight has happened in Amsterdam: Old-money families and new-money yuppies have stayed in the

high-rent, fortresslike old city, while immigrants and the poor are exiled to outlying neighborhoods or suburbs, with soulless modern architecture and housing projects that incubate crime.

But let's be fair. Amsterdam remains one of the most alluring and prosperous cities on earth. One breed of visitor can stay in a chain hotel, take canal-boat cruises, tiptoe through tulip fields, buy clogs, and never see a prostitute, nightclub, or smoking coffee shop. A different sort can wear spiky leather to S&M workshops, cruise live-sex shows, and stay stoned day and night in dens of depraved carnality. You can also opt for a world-class hotel, dine in epicurean restaurants, take in classical concerts at the Concertgebouw and jazz and contemporary music at the new Muziekgebouw (which is due to open in late 2004 or early 2005), shop for peerless antiques, and spend glorious days with the Dutch masters in the Rijksmuseum. Or combine any of the above.

Amsterdam today is unquestionably the Continent's most compact, sophisticated worldly city. Its inhabitants have created and nurtured a way of life—or more accurately, ways of life—that visitors either love or abhor, but that few remain indifferent to. Some people, visiting for the first time, want to throw up everything and live this way forever; others just want to throw up. Amsterdammers are invariably too busy enjoying their place of abode to care much either way. Multilingual, multicultural, rich, and disarmingly tolerant, irreverence fits them to a tee.

YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW

How to tolerate the Dutch sense of tolerance...

The Dutch in general, and Amsterdammers in particular, are very tolerant people. And they're the first to let you know that. Their extreme tolerance can sometimes be hard to take. The only thing Amsterdammers won't tolerate is intolerance, so rule number one is: Never criticize tolerance. The locals put up with prostitution; sex between (consenting) children ages 12 to 16; soft drugs and the attendant sleaze; millions of tourists; astronomical taxes; overcrowding (the city has one of the highest population densities in the world); huge numbers of immigrants and refugees; heavy smoking everywhere; frightful drivers; spoiled children; and dog dirt. On the international scene, they must put up with big, boorish neighbors like France and Germany, who are always telling them what to do when it comes to drugs, prostitution, immigration, and cooking. Among other things, this means that you too, as a visitor,

are fully expected to put up—graciously—with the aforementioned. This applies particularly when in restaurants, clubs, and cafes where the combined cigarette, cigar, dope, and pipe smoke is as thick as Dutch pea soup (see "When smoke gets in your eyes," below).

How to swallow a fish like the locals... Some nations love shrimp heads, others tree grubs, others still raw oysters that slither down your throat. The Dutch have a peculiar predilection for herring, raw or pickled, which they gobble in a variety of ways. Go to the zoo to see how the seals do it, or observe the Dutch at one of the countless sidewalk fish stands in practically every city, town, and village in the Netherlands. Outside Amsterdam, herring is held by the tail and swallowed whole (gutted and cleaned already, of course). Little ado is made about bones and fins. Amsterdammers instead chop their herring into three or four pieces and eat them off a napkin or small plate. They can always spot out-of-towners by the way they eat fish; pointing their faces at the sky, opening their mouths, and lowering the entire fish in for a bite. More than a few Amsterdammers like to consume them this way, too, surreptitiously—or as surreptitiously as can be given the nature of the activity—in the same way that they might try to avoid being recognized aboard a canal tour boat.

How to avoid becoming a crime statistic... The Red-Light District is in one of the oldest parts of town, roughly from Warmoesstraat east to Nieuwmarkt, and from Zeedijk south to Damstraat (which, within the district, changes its name to Oude Doelenstraat, and changes again to Oude Hoogstraat). Known as De Wallen (The Walls) in Dutch, in memory of the city walls that once stood here, this neighborhood is architecturally appealing, historically significant, and seedy as hell. Regulating prostitution is a good idea for many reasons, including lower health risks, but concentrating it in one area has its downside.

Contrary to what you'd expect, the district is pretty much safe by night when tittering tourists pour in for some sordid entertainment, but it can get dicey in the early morning when the Venus business is slow and the shops haven't yet opened. This is the time when druggies and

pickpockets lurk in the district's narrow alleys and prey on jet-lagged tourists out for a 7am stroll (a few hours later, by 9 or 10 say, most of the lowlifes and ne'er-do-wells have crashed out for the day and the district takes on a fresh, almost innocent air). Stow away your camera at any time of day or night, and don't take snapshots of the ladies in the picture windows. They don't want their photos taken because, as locals point out, "their daddies don't know" how they earn a living. If you are spotted taking snapshots, you're liable to have your fancy digital unit stomped, along with parts of your anatomy. Business-minded readers will want to know that these painted ladies rent their windows for 8-hour shifts (typically they pay about 75€/$86), during which time they take in 200€ to 400€ ($230–$460). Services begin with the poetically named "suck and fuck" (condom required), for 25€ to 40€ ($29–$46), and proceed from there to your wildest desires. The prostitutes' union is called The Red Thread.

The once-infamous (for being a hellhole) Zeedijk street, which curves along the eastern edge of the district, is no longer the dicey shooting gallery and mugger's mile it was since some upscale hotels opened nearby and the police chased the malefactors out of sight over the rim of the broad Dutch horizon—or at any rate a few blocks away and deeper into the district. But other parts of the district are still the haunts of drug dealers and addicts, purse snatchers, and other charming fauna. In general, use common sense: Don't stagger around the district when you're high; keep close track of your wallet or purse; don't flash your cash; and avoid the local dope peddlers, who sell low-quality wares and sometimes operate in cahoots with muggers. (Smoking coffee shops, described below, are much safer bets if you just want to enjoy some hash or marijuana.) At night especially, however, stick to the crowded streets and be wary of pickpockets at all times. There can be a sinister air to the bunches of often weird-looking men who gather on the canal bridges. Amsterdammers call the bridge that crosses Oudezijds Achterburgwal canal at Oude Hoogstraat (not far from Zeedijk, in the Red-Light District) the "Pillenbrug" (Pill Bridge) because so many druggies still hang out there, despite police efforts to move them on. And there is a sad aura around the "heroin-whores" who wander the darker streets.

What those pesky suffixes mean... In Dutch, *-straat* means "street," *-gracht* means "canal," *-plein* means "square," *-markt* means "market" or "market square," *-dijk* means "dike," and *-laan* means "avenue," all of which are used as suffixes attached directly to the name of the thoroughfare (for example, Princes' Canal becomes Prinsengracht).

How to define the indefinable *gezellig*... The Dutch make a cult of *gezellig*. *Gezellig*-ness (or *gezelligheid*) is the opposite of the other Dutch cult, that of efficiently run businesses and anything-goes commerce. The word is unpronounceable, and there's no English equivalent—cozy, homey, friendly, snuggly, cute, and swell all come close but don't quite get it. If you take something *gezellig* and stuff it into *gezellig* surroundings, *gezellig* becomes both form and function, medium and message. A well-worn brown cafe, a local restaurant, a living room with fireplace and friendly hound, even a good people-person, or a wonderful experience can be *gezellig*. Got that?

How to enjoy your hash and grass without being arrested... Tolerance may be a byword in Amsterdam, but so is ambiguity. For example, it's currently illegal to possess, use, or sell drugs, hard or soft. But if you have 5 grams (.18 oz.) of hash (or marijuana) or less, and a "small amount" of magic mushrooms, strictly for personal use, and you are 18 or older, you probably won't be hassled. Probably. However, you aren't allowed to buy or sell the stuff or smoke it outside so-called smoking coffee shops (which may stock no more than 500g/18 oz.). If the police want to, they can confiscate anything you have and fine you, but they seem to do this only when dope users behave obnoxiously. The authorities crack down indeed on hard-drug dealers and anyone causing a public nuisance. Currently there are some 250 smoking coffee shops in town (see the Nightlife chapter), down from 450 in 1995, which must follow certain "guidelines"—i.e., no hard drugs, no public nuisances, no sales to minors, and no transactions involving more than 5 grams. If a place breaks these rules, it will be shut down immediately, and its license to operate as a coffee shop revoked forever (nearly 200 licenses have been pulled in the last 5 years).

Magic mushrooms and so-called "smart drugs," the trend since the late '90s, are natural or synthetic hallucinogenics sold in specialized shops with names like "Conscious Dreams"; as long as users do not make trouble for others, they are ignored by the authorities. You can find out everything you ever wanted to know about dope and evolving legal issues at The Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum (see p. 129). To speak to an official about drug use (and abuse), call city hall at 020/552-9111; the operator will direct you to the info office. You can also call the Dutch Ministry of Justice (tel 070/370-7911; www.minjust.nl). ***Beware:*** A lot of Amsterdammers are fed up with pot smokers and the scruffy image they've given the city. Smoking weed in nonsmoking establishments—many now display a NO DRUGS sign, in English—will make you most unpopular, and you'll probably be asked to leave.

What the Jamaican flag really stands for... For one thing, the term "coffee shop" is never used nowadays by a normal cafe. You quickly learn to recognize the smoking variety. Sometimes it's the smell. Sometimes it's the name (Homegrown Fantasy, Smokey, Mellow Yellow, Grasshopper, etc.). Or the clientele—bleary-eyed, touristy, and/or trendy. Sometimes it's the use of palm trees or fronds (marijuana leaves cannot be shown) or the Jamaican flag on the shop front. Most often it's the decor—modern, slick, the opposite of *gezellig* brown cafes—and the music—grunge, funk, whatever is currently in fashion—played very loud. Bear in mind when you light up that organized crime has bought into most smoking coffee shops—an estimated 90% of them—which are ideal for money laundering.

When smoke gets in your eyes... Tobacco and dope pollution pose a serious challenge in all public places—hotel rooms, restaurants, cafes, lobbies, shops, businesses, and even (though it's illegal) public transportation. It's tough to avoid cigarette addicts, but many big hotels now have nonsmoking rooms (or entire floors); at others, call ahead and request management to air the room and bring in clean blankets. Fast-food, vegetarian, and luxury and/or hotel restaurants often have nonsmoking sections (though they're not always respected). The only way to survive at cafes is to

sit outside (often not an option, given the weather). Cafe de Jaren, one of the few spots with a nonsmoking room, got rid of it because managers were unable to keep smokers at bay. See the Accommodations and Dining & Cafes chapters for hotels and restaurants with nonsmoking rooms and areas.

How to ride—and not lose—a Dutch bike... There are about 500,000 bicycles in this city of three-quarters of a million. You can rent one cheaply, for about 7€ ($8.05) a day, and you'll usually be asked to leave an ID card or passport as collateral. But bouncing over the cobbles on a typically rigid Amsterdam bike—known as a *stadfiets* (city bike), and, if it's really old, rigid, and full of character, an *omafiets* (granny bike)—some with back-pedal brakes, in the rain, is no picnic. To begin with, car, bike, and tram traffic is chaotic. Pavements are often slippery, uneven, and furrowed with tram tracks that seem expressly designed to trap tires. Cross them at an angle if you value your life (trams don't like to stop for clumsy bikers). Bikes do not have the right of way in Amsterdam. Never ride two abreast or without reflectors both fore and aft, or you'll risk getting a ticket (though the police have better things to do than bother bikers). Keep a plastic bag handy to cover your seat when you park your bike: It rains a lot in these parts.

Pickpockets

Violent crime is rare in Amsterdam, but pickpocketing continues to be big business here, with thousands of cases reported annually. The police declare the last 3 months of each year as open season on foreign pickpockets, implementing special sting operations all over town that routinely net hundreds of professionals, all of them foreigners: South Americans, Africans, and East Europeans. The police warn known local pickpockets to stay home during such raids. Why? To break several international crime rings operating in Amsterdam and other European cities. (Local criminals are only too happy to oblige.) The prime locations for pickpocketing are the Dam, Damrak, Centraal Station, Schiphol Airport, and the Red-Light District. The techniques are varied: In one, the pickpocket slips his hand into your back pocket and pushes you violently forward behind the shoulders. Your wallet is swiped as you fall. Sometimes the culprits work in teams: One distracts you as the other removes your valuables. The police often set up information booths on the Dam to inform visitors of risks. Take note.

Biking in Amsterdam

What are the rules of the road for biking in Amsterdam? Apparently, there are none. Bikers can go anywhere they want, whenever they want, however they want, and do whatever they want when they get there. Or so you would think from the antics of Amsterdam's massed legions of bikers. They're enough to throw a scare into a bunch of Hell's Angels. Particularly terrifying are the mothers with two kids, one on the front handlebars and the other in a kid's seat at the back, dicing with the trams at Leidseplein. Biking is one activity where you should disregard the maxim "When in Amsterdam, do as the Amsterdammers do"—you might easily end up dead, which could spoil your entire vacation.

It takes a while to get used to moving smoothly and safely through the whirl of trams, cars, buses, trucks, fellow bikers, and pedestrians, particularly if you're on a typically ancient and much-battered stadfiets *(city bike), also known as an* omafiets *(grandmother bike)—the only kind that makes economic sense here, since anything fancier will attract a crowd of people wanting to steal it. It's better to develop your street smarts slowly. I know this sounds like wimpish advice—you might have mountain-biked from one end of the Rockies to another for all I know—but remember that not everyone on the* straat *is as sensible as you are.*

The first rule of biking in Amsterdam: Don't argue with trams—they bite back, hard. The second rule: Cross tram lines perpendicularly so your wheels don't get caught in the grooves, which could pitch you out of the saddle. And the third rule: Don't crash into civilians (pedestrians). That's about it. Like everyone else, you'll likely end up making up the rest of the rules as you go along.

Bike thieves are legion... Witness the cheap deals at flea markets and on the so-called "Fietsenbrug" or "Bridge of Stolen Bikes" (its real name is the Sleutelbrug, next to Amsterdam University on the edge of the Red-Light District), where you can pick up a stolen two-wheeler for as little as 10€ ($12). Locals readily admit that "after you've had your bike stolen five times, you too become a bike thief." They always use two locks, usually lug their bikes indoors, and offer up prayers to ward off their fellow thieves. Some hang their bikes off upper-story balconies, anti-black-bear style, others from the mooring cables of their houseboats. Avoid chaining your bike to a tree—you might harm the tree, and the Dutch, like most right-thinking folk, prefer not to harm trees. Under no circumstances should you use a finely tooled bike of the kind that would be perfect for riding through the Dutch country; that crowd of people around you has come not to admire your bike, but to steal it. If you rent from one of the dozens of

bike-hire agencies in town, ask about their theft policy. All of them supply at least one lock; most supply two. Generally, if the bike is stolen it's your responsibility, and it'll cost you 100€ to 200€ ($115–$230). Only a few agencies offer theft insurance. Most hotels do not have a guarded bike-parking area.

On the other hand, there are plenty of bike lanes (marked with an obvious symbol or the word *fietspad*), and cycling is a wonderful way to see the city—just ask Queen Beatrix, an avid cyclist. Though she lives near The Hague, she sometimes pedals through Amsterdam. You can spot her by her beautiful, classic Dutch bike and discreet police escort (a posse of about 20, also on bikes).

How to whiz around town... Forget the Amsterdam Metro—it serves dreary suburbs you'll never see (unless you're heading to the ballpark, i.e, the Ajax soccer stadium). Most visitors don't realize, however, that trams (streetcars) provide a fun, fast, and cheap way to roller coaster around town, which makes them very popular with locals. Those in the know buy either a *strippenkaart* (punch-as-you-go "strip tickets," which contain varying numbers of horizontal divisions, called strips, that are time-stamped when used), or a day, week, or month pass, all valid for any city transportation. They're sold at the GVB transit authority office in front of the main train station, at tobacco shops, post offices, VVV tourist info offices, and some train station ticket windows. The per-unit cost declines the more units you buy, so work out how many days you'll be in town and the distances (zones) you think you'll want to cover. A rough rule of thumb would be that if you're in town for just a few days, a 15-strip ticket should suffice; beyond that you should consider purchasing a 45-strip ticket (the maximum size possible). Of course, how often you use public transportation determines how fast you'll use up the strips. Tickets are also sold onboard the trams, but cost more per strip. There are 11 zones in greater Amsterdam; knowing exactly how many strips to punch is an art not easily mastered. A typical central-city ride (in Zone 5700 Centrum) is one zone, for which you punch two strips; two zones require three strips, and so forth (always one strip more than the total number of zones). Once stamped, the ticket is valid for 1 hour on trams, buses, and Metro lines.

If you have any doubts about the number of strips needed for your trip—even locals sometimes do—ask the driver or conductor to stamp your ticket for you and to tell you when you've reached your desired stop. Keep in mind that there are two types of trams in town: On those with conductors, drivers can't sell or stamp tickets, and they're likely to bark at you if you ask them to. A small sticker at the front of the tram will tell you to board at the rear if a conductor is present. But the best way to know where to jump on is simply to watch where the locals are lining up. Most trams have conductors, and on these the only available access door opens automatically; you board toward the rear (in the case of the oldest trams, at the rear) following arrowed indicators that point the way to the door. To board a tram that has no such arrowed indicators (and no conductor), push the button on the outside of the car beside any door. Getting off, you may need to push a button with an "open-door" graphic or the words *deur open.* Tram doors close automatically and they do it quite quickly, so don't hang around; you can place either a bag, or more riskily, a foot, in the opening so that the doors bounce back, or on older trams, tread on the bottom step to prevent the door from closing.

The system simply can be confusing. Even trams that do have conductors sometimes don't have them—God knows why—and intending passengers mill around in a state of confusion until somebody figures out what to do. It's made even more complicated by the fact that there are now several different models of tram, each model with a different layout of doors and conductor's station. If you read the previous advice carefully, you'll see it makes sense. But if it doesn't, just remember to go where the locals go to get on (and off). Don't sweat it: You'll get on—people manage it all the time.

How to avoid being eaten alive by mosquitoes in summer... Canals hold water. Mosquitoes breed in water. Amsterdam has a lot of canals. Therefore Amsterdam has a lot of...mosquito nets (*muskieten net,* in Dutch). In fact, mosquitoes can make a summer visit miserable. How to beat the bugs? Stay in a hotel with screens (ask before reserving), bring a net with you to drape around your bed, or buy one, if you need it, once you've arrived.

How to ice-skate like the locals... As Breughel might say if he were alive today, if you skate on thin ice, you can expect to sink through into dirty, cold canal water. You'll know when the time is right to strap on your gear and venture onto the icy waterways: When the locals migrate from easy pond skating in parks (Vondelpark and Oosterpark), squares (the Museum District), and at the Jaap Edenbaan outdoor skating rink, and begin zipping up and down the solid sections of the canals. They stay away from the edges and the areas around bridges, and so should you. If you're a serious skater, you're best off bringing your blades from home, or buying some new, since most Amsterdammers own their own—long-bladed *Noren* skates are favored—and skates are difficult to rent (see the Getting Outside chapter).

How to order and drink Dutch *jenever* (gin)... *Jenever*—Dutch gin—is a potentially lethal concoction made from molasses and juniper berries. This is the national spirit, in the widest sense of the term, and comes in three basic varieties: *jong* (young), *oud* (old), and *zeer oud* (senile). Sometimes it has delightful flavorings—*bitterje* (with angostura bitters), *citroenjenever* (lemony), or *bessenjenever* (sweetened with black-currant syrup). Belly up to the bar of a brown cafe or *proeflokaal* tap house (see the Dining & Cafes chapter for details), lean over your brimming, tulip-shaped glass, and slurp. When the glass is properly overflowing, it's called a *kamelenrun* (the one that broke the camel's back), or an *over het IJ-kijkertje* (view over the IJ channel, the narrow channel of water behind Centraal Station that, among other things, separates central Amsterdam from Amsterdam-Noord). The hip, if generic, way to ask for one is a *borrel* (a shot). There's a whole vocabulary to accompany *jenever: recht op en neer* (straight up), *pikketanussie* (something akin to "cheers"), and half a dozen other unpronounceable (and probably obscene) terms. Many locals knock back their booze with a

Lost Art?

Today's Amsterdammers are no more than a pale shadow of their esteemed ancestors when it comes to quaffing beer. In 1613 there were 518 taverns in the city, one for every 200 or so inhabitants. Today the ratio has slipped to one per 725. It seems that the 17th century was a golden age in more senses than one.

beer chaser, called a *kopstoot,* literally "a blow to the head." Fitting. When it comes to *jenever,* as with many other products—beer, cheese, mineral water, chocolates—many Dutch people sneakingly prefer artisanal Belgian-made brands to their own mass-produced champs.

How to navigate the gay capital of Europe... Admittedly, "Gay Amsterdam" doesn't ring quite as poetically as "Gai Paris," but this is where the action is. Homosexuality has been legal here since 1811, and the age of consent (since 1971) is a low 16. In 1987 the city erected the world's first memorial to gays and lesbians persecuted by the Nazis, the so-called Homomonument, three rose-colored granite triangles spilling across the small square behind Westerkerk church and into the waters of the Keizersgracht canal. It has since become a rallying point for the gay community. Scores of clubs, bars, restaurants, and hotels all over town cater to every imaginable taste and tendency (though most are more oriented toward gay men, as opposed to lesbians). Gays are thoroughly integrated into business, journalism, politics, and the arts in Amsterdam; nonetheless, four largely gay districts exist. Reguliersdwarsstraat, between Rembrandtplein and Koningsplein, and Amstel, on the south riverbank between Vijzelstraat and the Blauwbrug (the Blue Bridge, over the Amstel), attract a young, hip crowd. Warmoesstraat, which traverses the Red-Light District on its western edge, draws more of a leather, S&M, and cling-wrap-jeans bunch. Kerkstraat, between Leidsegracht and Vijzelstraat, is tame, and appeals to quieter, older gays.

A lot of gay venues welcome straights, and some are among the city's liveliest. Local lesbians have a limited club scene; mostly, they hang out in cafes and at ad hoc all-night parties listed in local magazines (***Day by Day*** and ***Gay & Night Magazine*** are published in English). Lesbian (and gay/lesbian) bars, cafes, and discos like **Café Saarein II** (tel 020/623-4901; Elandsstraat 119), **You 2** (tel 020/421-0900; Amstel 178), and **GETTO** (tel 020/421-5151; Warmoesstraat 51), or bookshops like **Xantippe** (tel 020/623-5854; Prinsengracht 290) and **Vrolijk** (tel 020/623-5142; www.vrolijk.nl; Paleisstraat 135) also provide fliers advertising these parties. All the latest gay info is available at www.gayamsterdam.com or www.switchboard.nl. (See

the Accommodations, Nightlife, and Hotlines & Other Basics chapters for more on gay Amsterdam.)

What passes for an age of consent... Tolerance and ambiguity blend in the question of the age of consent for both heterosexual and homosexual intercourse. Legally, it is 16. However, a difficult-to-interpret law, passed in December 1991, makes nonviolent sexual acts among persons aged 12 to 16 an affair to be dealt with by parents. If complaints are made by either the children or parents, the case can be referred to the Council of Youth Protection or to the police. Such complaints can be filed for up to 12 years after the alleged act. The law was intended to allow cases of sex among teenagers of about the same age to be resolved outside the legal system and was in no way intended to encourage sex between adults and children. Nonetheless, the result has been that child prostitutes and "rent-a-boy" agencies continue to do business.

Don't Go

Gogh is not pronounced Go, as many Americans incorrectly say it, but like Khokh (the "kh" sound is like "ch" in the Scottish pronunciation of "loch"—not "lock"). If you can pronounce van Gogh correctly, you should have no problem with Schiphol (Skhip-ol), Scheveningen (Skheveningen), and 's-Gravenhage (ss-Khraven-hakhe; the correct full name for Den Haag: The Hague).

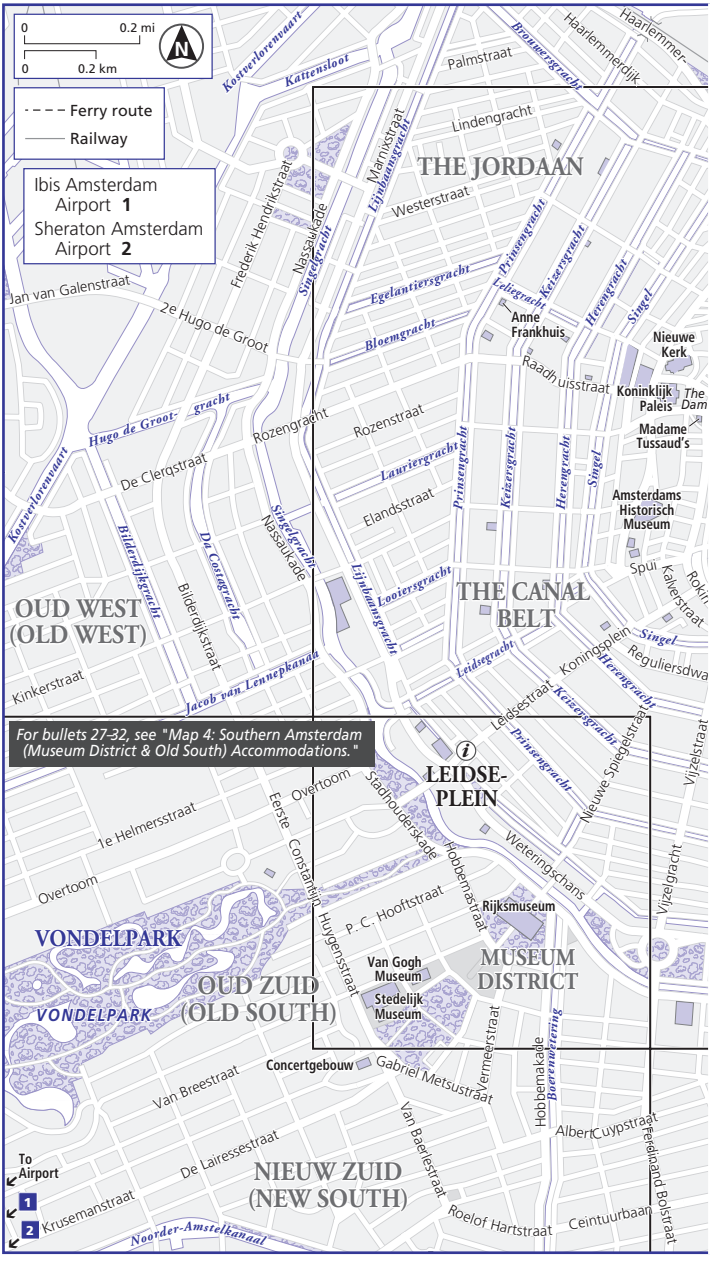
How to greet (or take leave of) an Amsterdammer... When you meet locals for the first time and are introduced, you shake hands. Thereafter no more handshaking is expected until you meet up again after a considerable period of separation. With their constant clasps and kisses, the French and (especially) Italians seem to embarrass the Dutch. Ditto Americans with their countless hearty handshakes. In Amsterdam, once you've made friends, you exchange three pecks (really just a smacking of the lips) on the cheeks. The proper order is left-right-left. Three times. Never two or four. Men do this with women; women with men; women with women; but not often men with men, unless they are very good friends, or gay (or Italian).

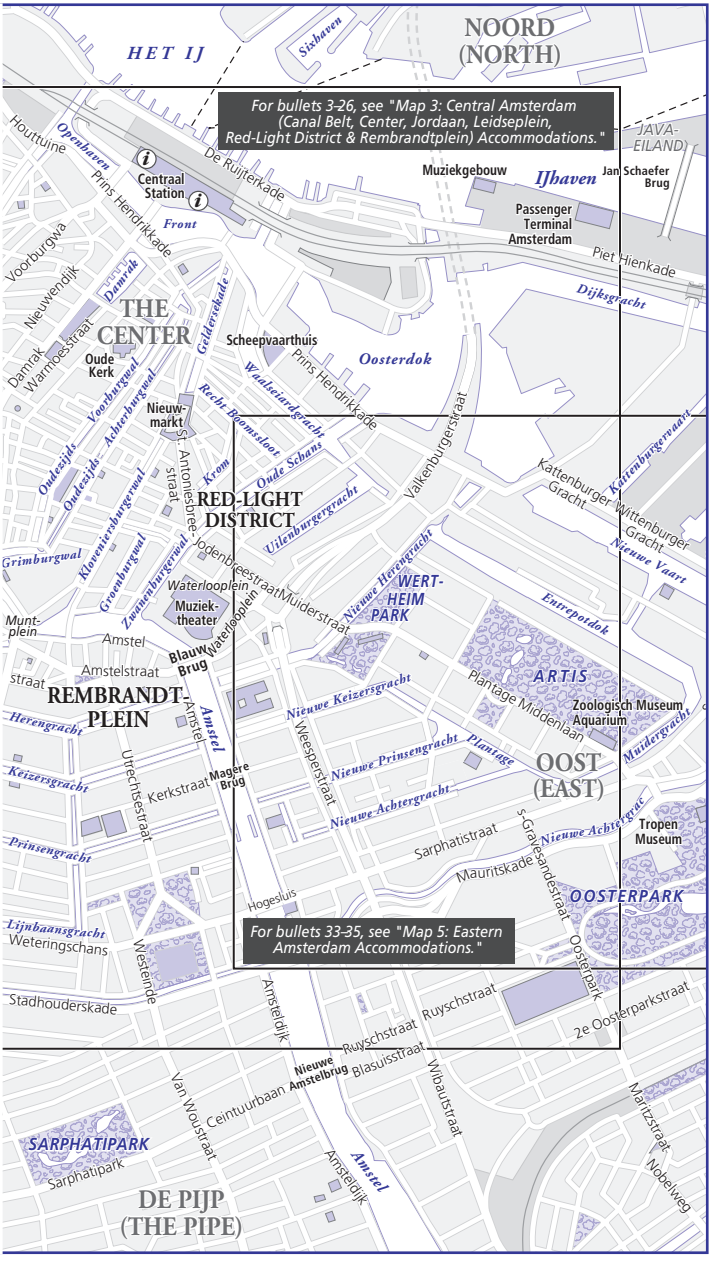
ACCOMM
Do Not
Disturb

ODATIONS

1

Map 2: Amsterdam Accommodations




HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD (NORTH)
For bullets 3-26, see "Map 3: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Accommodations."
Houttuine
Openhaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Centraal Station
De Ruijterkade
Front
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer Brug
JAVA-EILAND
Passenger Terminal Amsterdam
Piet Heinkade
Dijksgracht
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Warmoesstraat
THE CENTER
Geldersekade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Oude Kerk
Nieuwmarkt
Rechtboomssloot
Oude Schans
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Krom
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Uilenburgergracht
Valkenburgerstraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburgervaart
Wittenburgergracht
Nieuwe Vaart
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgerwal
Jodenbreestraat
Waterlooplein
Muziek-theater
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-HEIM PARK
Entrepotdok
Munt-plein
Amstel
Blauwbrug
Amstelstraat
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Herengracht
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere Brug
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Weesperstraat
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Plantage
Plantage Middenlaan
ARTIS
Zoologisch Museum Aquarium
Muidergracht
OOST (EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
s-Gravelandsestraat
Tropen Museum
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
OOSTERPARK
Oosterpark
2e Oosterparkstraat
Hogesluis
For bullets 33-35, see "Map 5: Eastern Amsterdam Accommodations."
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westeinde
Stadhouderskade
Amstelsluis
Ruyschstraat
Nieuwe Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amsteldijk
DE PIJP (THE PIPE)
Maritzstraat
Nobelweg

Basic Stuff

Parts of Amsterdam may be renewing, modernizing, trendifying, and gentrifying, but many of its hotels retain the character of earlier epochs. In Amsterdam hotels, don't mind the labyrinthine corridors and the lace-draped window that looks onto a wall. Call it *gezellig,* i.e., cozy. The Dutch obsession with coziness applies doubly to hotels in Amsterdam. Ask Amsterdammers what counts in a hotel and you're likely to hear them say "atmosphere" or "character," rather than "luxury," "comfort," or "convenience." A location on one of the Golden Age canal sides doesn't hurt either, and in that case, atmosphere and character are just about guaranteed. What locals might consider a great room can be cramped, cluttered, nearly inaccessible, and impregnated with the smell of stale tobacco, so long as it affords a taste of the two primarily desirable attributes noted above and doesn't disappoint when it comes to value. Happily, the Dutch are also a nation of neatniks, and, like the Swiss, worship efficiency. So, many Amsterdam hotels are homey, squeaky clean, and professionally run.

The city has a startling capacity to accommodate all tastes; you'll be delighted to discover hotels sleazy and sublime, catering to backpackers, gays, philosophers, musicians, S&M aficionados, dope smokers, and cyclists. If Dutch "charm" doesn't come high on your list, most international chain hotels are also here, as well as the home-grown AMS and what survives locally of the Golden Tulip group (most of its hotels were transferred to the Spanish-based NH Hotels chain, which seem to have somehow taken some of the class out of many of the hotels they took over). Amsterdam has two super-luxury hotels—the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** and the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam**—that rank among Europe's best, plus a constellation of bona fide charmers like the **Ambassade, Blakes,** and the **Hotel de l'Europe.**

Amsterdam's canal-house hotels—centuries-old, converted private homes facing the capital's 100-plus waterways—are the most sought-after properties. Most are small, *gezellig,* family-run gems. Only a few, such as **Ambassade** and **Estheréa,** have elevators, and the staircases in many are like steep ship gangways, leading to rooms where average Americans bump their heads and sleep with their feet hanging off the beds, and larger-than-average Americans may need to breath in or turn sideways to get through the door. Don't forget that there are dozens of

leafy gardens and courtyards in town; often a room overlooking one of these, on the back side of a canal house or other hotel, is preferable to a potentially noisy canal-side room with a view.

Though bed-and-breakfasts are not common in Amsterdam, almost all one-, two-, and three-star hotels include in the room price a copious Dutch buffet breakfast of ham, cheeses, boiled eggs, rolls, butter, jam, croissants, and fruit juices (though in some downscale establishments what you'll actually get are a few sorry-looking, curled-up-at-the-edges slices of cheese, assorted cold cuts of indeterminate provenance, and eggs boiled hard enough to sink an enemy submarine). Some four-star and almost all five-star hotels charge extra—up to 30€ ($35)—for continental breakfast, and considerably more for a Dutch or American breakfast.

Nonsmoking rooms are few and far between in Amsterdam, found primarily in luxury and business establishments, though even these sometimes smell of smoke, since the Dutch simply ignore smoking prohibitions. Be aware that in some Dutch hotels, especially family-run operations, double rooms could have twin beds pushed together. Calvin would approve.

Winning the Reservations Game

Most of the hotels listed here have been inspected and rated by the Benelux Hotel Classification system, which assigns them stars—not according to quality, but simply according to the number of rooms and the facilities provided (such as elevator, garage, and special services).

But Amsterdam is an expensive city, and many of those beds are pricey (around 40% are in four- or five-star establishments). This overabundance at the high-end continues to ramp up competition, bringing prices down for travelers who know to ask for a favorable room rate: No one pays "rack rates" (standard list prices) anymore for upper-end rooms, and because of this continuing price war, you can often get a five-star room for the list price of a four-star room, or a four-star room for the price of a three-star. However, tourist-class and budget hotels are harder to crack, especially those in canal houses, which are very popular.

The best approach is to call, fax, or e-mail several hotels, ask what their standard rates are, then ask for the corporate rate, the weekend rate, the special discount rate, the long-stay rate,

the winter (and bad-weather) rate (which ought to be available 9 months of the year), the advance-booking rate, and any other rate you can think of. There's almost always a better rate available (except during the Christmas and New Year's holidays and the last week of April, when the queen's birthday celebrations occur) than the first one you were quoted. The Dutch are a nation of traders and are used to dickering. Book as far ahead as possible: The prospect of your business will soften up even the toughest managers, and you'll also be able to request the kind of room you prefer. The longer your proposed stay, the more leverage you have. Visitors sometimes negotiate a room rate based on a lengthy stay—of a week or more—then switch gears and convince the hotel to apply that rate to their actual (shorter) stay. Dutch hoteliers whine and complain about such underhanded methods, but use them themselves when traveling.

Reserving through a travel agent in your home country will probably get you a good rate, too, since many hotels belong to international reservations systems (Accor, Bilderberg, Carlton, CIGA, Concorde, Golden Tulip International BV, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Mercure, NH Hotels, Swissôtel, Utell International, and so forth). The various branches of the **Amsterdam Tourist Office** (called the VVV—pronounced *fay-fay-fay*) will book rooms for you at the last minute, but you must go in person to one of their offices and pay a fee of about 3€ ($3.45) per person (later deducted from your hotel bill). The main VVV offices are inside Centraal Station and opposite it at Stationsplein 10 (tel 0900/400-4040; 55 euro cents/63¢ per minute; www.amsterdamtourist.nl, www.visitamsterdam.com, and www.holland.com). Branch offices are at Leidseplein 1 (corner of Leidsestraat), Stadionplein, and the main arrivals hall at Schiphol Airport (marked HOLLAND TOURIST INFORMATION). A further possibility for same-day reservations is the **Holland Tourist Information Office** located at Damrak 35, in central Amsterdam, or **Hotel Bookings,** a private website at www.bookings.nl. Internet bookings on the hotels' own website usually command a discount.

Is There a Right Address in Amsterdam?

It depends entirely upon what you're looking for. Of the dozen or so distinct neighborhoods within the A10 beltway, which separates Amsterdam from the suburbs, none is bad or dangerous, but not all are desirable, and those that *are* desirable may be so for different reasons.

The city's core, inside the Singelgracht canal, is, unsurprisingly, called the Centrum. Fanning out from it in a wide semicircle are, counterclockwise, the Oud West (Old West), Oud Zuid (Old South), De Pijp (The Pipe), and Oost (East); beyond the Old South is the Nieuw Zuid (New South). Distances are short: A fast walker can cross from Centraal Station to the New South in an hour and a quarter; a tram or taxi takes 15 to 20 minutes.

The Centrum, the biggest and most interesting district, is really a mosaic of neighborhoods. If you don't mind noisy sex-tourism crowds (both gay and straight), winking red neon lights, and hash or grass smoke wafting from the dozens of smoking coffee shops, check out the several top hotels on the edge of the **Red-Light District,** a few hundred yards from the train station, abutting the Dam and the main shopping streets Rokin, Damrak, and Kalverstraat. Despite its reputation for prostitution, drug dealing, and petty crime, this area is perfectly safe if you know how to navigate it (see p. 111 in the You Probably Didn't Know section), and in any case, all the upscale hotels here are beyond the carefully contained sleaze zone. And, from these hotels, you can walk in minutes to anywhere in the center of town.

Just west of the Red-Light District, and still in the heart of the Centrum, is a boomerang-shaped neighborhood sometimes referred to as the **Dam** or **Spui.** Stretching from Centraal Station to the flower market at Muntplein, it contains a maze of tiny alleys, several appealing squares, and a handful of the city's best restaurants, spread along Spuistraat. However, the neighborhood's main arteries—Damrak, Rokin, and Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal—are noisy, with heavy tram traffic and crowds of pedestrians. Most of the canals here have been covered over; the exception is the Singel, originally the medieval city's moat, along which you'll see several fine hotels.

Beyond the Singel is the celebrated **Grachtengordel** neighborhood, clustering around three semicircular canals—Herengracht, Keizersgracht, and Prinsengracht—built in Amsterdam's 17th-century Golden Age. "Grachtengordel" in Dutch has also come to mean "chic," "plugged-in," "moneyed," etc., and here you'll find tony restaurants and cafes, boutiques for the megabucks crowd, and the antiques dealers' quarter on Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (see the Shopping chapter). A location here, in the northern sector of the canal ring, is great for exploring the adjacent quirky Jordaan neighborhood; a place in the

middle of the Jordaan puts you within striking distance of the big museums and one of the city's two liveliest squares, Leidseplein. At the southern and eastern end of the curve, you'll be close to the second of the liveliest squares, Rembrandtplein, and to the Amstel River, the flea market on Waterlooplein, and the adjacent Muziektheater opera and dance venue. You may have to book far in advance to get into Grachtengordel hotels, but it's worth it.

Still within the Centrum, on the district's western edge, is the **Jordaan,** a wonderful part of town with narrow streets and narrower buildings; quiet, shady canals; and scads of one-of-a-kind boutiques, cafes, and neighborhood restaurants. Unfortunately, there are only a few hotels here, and they're strictly downscale properties.

The prosperous **Old South** neighborhood, beyond the Singelgracht, is looking better all the time, especially if you want quiet nights. The "big three" museums—the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and the modern art Stedelijk Museum—are here, as well as the handsome Vondelpark, a great place to bike, jog, rollerblade, or picnic. Here, there are quiet streets and turn-of-the-20th-century architecture, plus great shopping, but it becomes hard to wander the central city neighborhoods' marvelous streets at night—one of the great joys of staying in Amsterdam—because the neighborhood is a bit far away. The same (and more so) applies to the **New South,** an even more prosperous and farther-flung neighborhood dotted with interesting Amsterdam School architecture. The Hilton is here, as well as a few four-star places strung along Apollolaan. If you stay in the New South you'll have to rely on trams and taxis to get around. But if easy access to the airport and countryside are your priorities, then go for it.

The Lowdown

In search of canal-house coziness... Just because a building overlooks a canal doesn't mean it's a canal house, or there would be hundreds in Amsterdam. True canal-house hotels occupy old private residences—usually from the 17th or 18th centuries—and have canal-side rooms with views. A few bare-bones canal houses have steep stairs, no elevators, and no facilities to speak of. Still, these are only-in-Amsterdam hotels, which is why visitors put

up with their inconvenience. A beer can's throw from Rembrandtplein, popular **Seven Bridges** is a small, intimate perch with affable owners, overlooking one of Amsterdam's most picturesque waterways. Luxuriate amid the comfy old furnishings, the houseplants, and views (ask for a canal-side room on an upper floor—not in the attic or the basement)—but be prepared for slightly inflated prices. The flower market, a few blocks away, seems to have opened an annex in the lobby of **Agora,** an upscale two-star in a 1735 house decorated with Persian throw rugs, feathery armchairs, and scattered antiques. A pocket-sized back garden adds to the charm. Next door at the **Waterfront,** owner Willem Van der Ham has totally remodeled and upgraded, with mahogany furniture, bay windows, thick carpets, and drapes—but it's still two stars and affordable.

At **Amsterdam Wiechmann,** visitors choose between *gezellig*, antiques-filled canal-side doubles or less expensive and more anonymous modern rooms. This narrow canal house has a memorable lobby, with delftware hanging on the walls and the kind of Oriental carpets you see draped over tables in many of Amsterdam's old-fashioned brown cafes. The breakfast room looks like a greenhouse, and there's a suitably snug bar and lounge. The modest **Hegra**'s most distinctive feature may well be its step-gable facade; it sure isn't the dull, though tidy, decor or stern staff. The low price and handy central location, however, may make you very forgiving. Pricier but spanking new and full of Calvinistic minimalist charm is **'t Hotel,** a three-star overlooking lovely Leliegracht.

Higher-end canal houses mix charm with practical touches like elevators, bars, and restaurants, though you still shouldn't expect perks like pools, fully equipped health centers, or convention facilities. Near Westerkerk, the four-star **Toren** has a 17th-century marble entrance hall and a lovely breakfast room with a painted, molded ceiling, and some of its doubles come into the moderately priced category. Canal-side rooms have nice views, but consider instead a room looking onto the attractive garden. There are antiques, fireplaces, and cozy public areas. **Estheréa,** a comfy four-star, is increasingly cozy since many rooms have been redone in recent years with pastel colors and quirky light fixtures. **Ambassade** has museum-quality

antiques, a library of books by author-guests, and a heady location on the famous Golden Bend—locals call this hotel the "Mini Amstel" (see "The grande dames," below) because it offers luxury and character: marble bathrooms, prints and oils by minor Dutch masters, crystal chandeliers, and antique armchairs. The **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer,** sprawling along Prinsengracht and dotted with hidden gardens and courtyards, is downright opulent, in a predictably plush corporate style that's totally un-*gezellig.*

For tourists who want clogs, windmills, and tulips... If gawking at Amsterdam from a tour bus suits you, book rooms at the **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky.** Commonly known as the "Kras'" (can a nickname tell all?—although it's pronounced *kraz*), this Victorian grande dame saw its heyday 100 years ago; the Polish tailor-turned-hotelier who founded it started out in 1866 with the Wintertuin (Winter Garden) restaurant and went on to build a grand hotel around it. The Krasnapolsky now fills several city blocks, drawing package sightseers and conventioneers to its cavernous interior, which has been remodeled countless times. Visitors on whirlwind tours of windmills and tulip fields will like the comfortable rooms and facilities at the **NH Barbizon Palace**—the rooms are basically decorated in cookie-cutter traditional, though some have exposed oak rafters. The over-the-top faux marble colonnade in the lobby looks like it was lifted from a Cinecittà sandals-and-toga movie set (*Hercules Against Rome,* perhaps). Across the center of town, at the immense Marriott-owned **Renaissance Amsterdam,** there's plenty of space to stow souvenirs in the forgettable rooms and to break in your clogs at the Boston Club Disco, a place business types tend to like.

For enemies of clogs, windmills, and tulips... There's not even room to park tour buses in front of the **Ambassade,** a canal-house hotel that occupies 12 17th-century properties on the handsome Herengracht. The discreet, anonymous owner collects antiques, and it shows in the total lack of kitsch. Each room is different, and that appeals to the literary crowd usually found here (many Dutch publishers and agents book rooms here for their star writers—there's now a charming author-guest library on

the ground floor). Crystal chandeliers and enormous rooms make you feel like a pearl in an oyster; a few even have canopy beds. Savvy business travelers and other well-heeled guests stay at the **Estheréa,** an upscale canal-house hotel with a great location overlooking the Singel. Between gazing from your window at surrounding mansions and chatting up your hosts, a friendly family that counts several generations of owners of this hotel, you'll feel more like an Amsterdam resident here than a tourist. The lobby of **'t Hotel,** a canal-house hotel, doubles as an antiques shop. The **Toren,** a small, luxurious four-star, has antiques, a garden, and an exclusive atmosphere. Lovers of spare luxury—along with chic black decor and dress, and more males with pony tails than you'd find on a Kentucky stud farm—will want to check out **Blakes,** with its garden court and top-rated restaurant. A few steps down the designer-price scale, but still with a reasonable claim to distinction, is the **Arena,** in a 19th-century former orphanage. The interior has been redone by a bunch of up-and-coming young Dutch designers.

The grande dames... Back in 1866, when the **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** opened for business, things like heated winter terraces, modern plumbing, central heating, and electric lights were unknown. The Kras was the first in Amsterdam in all these departments and was the most fashionable place in town. Time hasn't stood still: Much of the charming decor of old is gone—though the Winter Garden, one of the hotel's restaurants, a classy 19th century–type place, is still going strong—and the location on the rather tacky Dam isn't what it used to be, even if the Royal Palace is no more than an easy lob of a crown across the way. The Victorian gentry who frequented the Kras would probably go elsewhere today, yet there's a bit of the grande dame left, especially off season, when the Winter Garden is a joy and there are no tulips in bloom to attract the bus crowds. In an earlier incarnation, the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** (sans "Inter-Continental") was the Krasnapolsky's direct rival, opening a year later in 1867. After a years-long, $50-million renovation, the Amstel is now in a class all its own, with sky-high prices to match. Liveried doormen flank the marble grand hall, and if you're on a shopping spree, diamonds are available at the

hotel's boutique. Dutch royals have staged family celebrations in the opulent *Spiegelzaal* (Mirror Room), and the list of celeb guests is long.

The **Hotel de l'Europe,** built in 1896, was the top hotel in town for most of the 20th century. Haughtily perched over the river and Muntplein, it looks much as it probably did the day it opened. Despite all the usual trappings of luxury—the faux Empire furniture, thick carpets, molded plaster decorations, and doorman with epaulets and striped trousers—it remains behind the Amstel and the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam.** Though the Grand itself is new, it boasts a historic site—it started out as the 15th-century convent of St. Cecilia and served as city hall until 1992. (Queen Beatrix and the late Prince Claus were married upstairs in 1966.) Planted on two beautiful courtyards just south of the Red-Light District, this newest of the grand hotels offers muted colors and understated luxury.

In search of the indefinable *gezelligheid*... In a city where coziness means floral arrangements, knickknacks, antique furniture, grandfather clocks, and pianos (baby grands are best), a young Irish couple runs the cozy **Canal House,** occupying five old houses on (and behind) one of the city's prettiest canals. It wins hands-down in most *gezelligheid* categories. Quiet, quaint, and cute are the operative words. Guests swoon over the memorable breakfast room with its parquet floors, molded plaster ceilings, and baby grand piano. Luckily, back rooms are just as snug, and even quieter. The **Washington**'s armchairs, polished parquet floors, red runners, and carved banister exude Edwardian comfort. It's the kind of seriously quiet place where you nod and whisper to your fellow guests, as classical music plays softly in the background: The Concertgebouw auditorium (Amsterdam's premier venue for classical music) is nearby and most guests are musicians or music-lovers. The book-lined salon and vaguely colonial terrace of **De Filosoof**—a one-of-a-kind hotel with philosophy as a theme (one of the co-owners, Ida Jongsma, is a former high school philosophy teacher)—are quintessentially cozy, though some of the rooms are anything but (the Heidegger Room is thoroughly black). The Aristotle Room has a classical pediment; the Plato Room is black

and white, with trompe l'oeil decorations; and so forth. At the **Toren,** red bedspreads and heavy fabrics, the roaring fireplaces, and the twinkling chandeliers provide a taste of cozy-luxe *gezellig,* with class.

Taking care of business... If you're looking for a big, American-style hotel, with big, no-nonsense rooms and all the business facilities you'll need, try the **Renaissance Amsterdam** (formerly a Ramada, now a Marriott hotel). In addition to its seven-story atrium lobby and tidy theme-decor rooms (Scandinavian, Oriental, Old Dutch, Art Deco), the **Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam** has a business and conference center in its south building. You may not even have to leave your comfortable room at the **NH Barbizon Palace,** right across from Centraal Station: Telephones come with computer interfaces, and more technology is available at the front desk. Then, when working hours are over, you can amble downstairs to the Henry Hudson Club lounge—though a bit starchy, it's not bad at all if you fancy relaxing with a book by a crackling fire in winter.

If you don't need the apparatus of a big hotel, look into the practical, family-run **Estheréa,** which draws a mix of discreet businesspeople and well-heeled families. The hotel overlooks the Singel, between the Dam and the flower market, and offers nice canal views and free Internet access. If you want to venture off the buttoned-down track, stay at **Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken,** a quietly confident Museum District four-star in a Dutch Art Nouveau building near the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and modern art museum, the Stedelijk Museum. It was remodeled top to bottom in 2001 with a corporate "boutique-design" theme and attracts a midlevel business clientele.

For travelers with old money... The owner of the extraordinary three-star **Ambassade** knows that old-money travelers hate to spend more than they have to. For the price of a closet at the five-star competition, you can get a suite with a sitting room and two bedrooms here. Half the museums in town would love to get hold of the china and grandfather clocks in the hotel's common areas. If money's no object, then by all means settle into the **Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam.** Keen to have an instant pedigree,

this recently founded hotel quietly and rather disingenuously touts the building's 600-year history (in fact, much of the complex dates to the early 1900s). The desk staff dress and behave like good Dutch ladies and gentlemen, whispering what others shout. Black-and-gray marble floors grace the vaulted lobby, and the rooms feature a subdued palette of salmon, teal, and saffron. Guests take tea (or more interesting drinks) in a leafy inner courtyard and meals at Café Roux, the pricey brainchild of restaurateur Albert Roux of London's famous Le Gavroche. The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam,** with its 1867 birth date and megabucks pedigree, modestly calls itself "a favorite with cosmopolitan society—from royalty and the aristocracy to luminaries in the arts and international affairs." Indeed—as long as they have fat wallets. If you're worried about denting the old trust fund, instead check out the **Hotel de l'Europe,** little changed since its 1896 birth. Less sumptuous than either the Amstel or the Grand, this remodeled oldster will still be sufficiently coddling (and clean).

For travelers with new money... The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** has just enough old-school cachet to attract both Golden Age spenders and the aggressively nouveau. Rock stars and groupies with euros to burn monopolize the palatial health club and pool. Water taxis drop shiploads of crocodile bags on the private dock, and deeply tanned torsos draped in gold chains and diamonds are spotted in midwinter in the magnificent arcaded lobby. Some guests probably wish the pianist in the swank La Rive restaurant would stop with the classical stuff already and play "New York, New York," "Volare," or anything less stiff. The endless roster of glitzy visitors is the talk of the town (Red Hot Chili Peppers, Janet Jackson, Madonna, Jagger, Spielberg...). Naturally, a chauffeured Rolls-Royce and historic saloon boat are at your disposal.

The immense **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** is especially popular if you want to show the locals that you own (or have rented) a large luxury car and are going to drive through Amsterdam despite traffic restrictions, right into the garage at the Kras, at the center of the universe on the Dam. The landmark Dutch Art Nouveau **Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American,** on lively Leidseplein, likes

to call itself "the entertainment hotel" because minor rock stars and groupies who can't quite manage the Amstel (though still manage to be mildly obnoxious) book spacious rooms here (redone in mock Art Deco, many have views over Leidseplein or the Singelgracht canal). Guests here pose in the famous Bar Américain (see p. 218), feeling wonderful when the bartender remembers their names and favorite drinks. (He remembers everyone's name and favorite drink.) The hip new-rich are fighting over the 20-odd rooms of super-luxe **Blakes,** in a 17th-century former theater/almshouse/lawyers' office converted into a showcase for British designer Anouska Hempel's megabuck Asian-spartan-look rooms (mostly black). And if you've got not very much new money, try the **Arena.** The exterior of this ex–19th century orphanage bears a passing resemblance to Dracula's castle, but the interior proves they really knew how to do an orphanage in those days. Monumental marble staircases, cast-iron banisters, stained-glass windows, marble columns, original murals—all have been faithfully restored. The rambling spaces where the dormitories once were now house stylish doubles and twins. Spare modern rooms, some sporting timber roof beams and wooden floors, line long, high-ceilinged corridors on two floors.

Dowdy but lovable... Even the name sounds nice and sweet: **Acacia.** It's the kind of place where first-time travelers meet gentle, middle-aged folks wearing sandals and white socks. Owners Hans and Marlene van Vliet have kids and like people, and their little, triangle-shaped Jordaan hotel is simple and clean. The staircase is as steep as they come (naturally there's no elevator) and there are no TVs in the rooms, but then you'll be too busy reading up on Amsterdam to worry about Dutch TV. The **Amsterdam Wiechmann,** a narrow canal-house hotel, has too much character to be prim, but the lady at the desk will protect you from undesired elements: "No one not registered is allowed in the rooms," she booms. The **Bridge** has a grand lobby but plain-Jane rooms and a mousy-friendly staff. The **Owl,** a pleasant, family-run three-star hotel with two-star prices, just one block from Vondelpark on a quiet residential street, is the kind of place where you might run into birdish maiden aunts who've brought their nieces up

from the provinces. With a pastel color scheme, the no-nonsense, summery style matches the garden setting. Tidy **Van Onna** is a cheap one-star on peaceful Bloemgracht canal in the Jordaan. All rooms are furnished with modern, metal-frame chairs, tables, and beds; the bathrooms are squeaky-clean but eccentric: The shower heads stick out over the toilets and drain in the middle of the floor. At the **Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel,** a little hotel wedged into a narrow, early-1900s building in the blue-collar De Pijp neighborhood, guests are encouraged to pedal their days away sightseeing. A bike hangs from the facade of the hotel, and its owners, Jos and Clemens, are keen cyclists and will rent you two-wheelers for about 5€ ($5.75) a day (fractionally cheaper than commercial rates). Renovated in 1995, the place is clean both literally and figuratively: A NO DRUGS sign adorns the front door.

For those who hate surprises... If you're used to the plush, overstuffed, thick-carpeted brand of luxury found at the Sheraton hotels worldwide, you'll be delighted by the **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer.** Occupying 24 old canal houses in the shadow of Westerkerk, this luxury hotel has a warren of inner gardens and courtyards, some with a private entrance on one of the canals. The **Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam,** in Old Amsterdam south of the Red-Light District, offers typical SAS theme rooms—choose between faux Scandinavian, old Dutch, Oriental, or Art Deco. There's a pleasant enough restaurant (the De Palmboom Brasserie), a brown cafe (the Pastorie Bar, set in a transplanted 18th-century landmark vicarage), and a glassed-in atrium lobby with a fountain. The **NH Schiller,** a seven-story, turn-of-the-century property overlooking Rembrandtplein, remains a monument to its original owner, Fritz Schiller, a slightly mad amateur painter whose kitschy landscapes adorn the lobby, cafe, and rooms to this day. A certain amount of character remains in the comfy leather armchairs and sofas in the vaulted lobby and in the wood-paneled, crepuscular Cafe Schiller, once a cutting-edge literary hangout but now a comfortable and original hideout for friendly locals.

Luscious love nests... The hushed, antiques-filled salons, library, and canal-view rooms of the **Ambassade,** on the Herengracht's Golden Bend, are ideal for soulful yearnings.

Middle-aged and older romantics who don't make noise when making love will find a cozy, antique-feathered nest at **Canal House,** overlooking Keizersgracht, almost next door to Westerkerk. If you always wanted to float that romantic proposal but didn't know how, you can rent a cute little houseboat covered with flowers from the **Acacia,** in the supremely romantic Jordaan, and make love afloat on the leafy Lijnbaansgracht. Gays who prefer a mixed clientele, lots of green plants, and comfy old furniture favor **Seven Bridges,** a tiny canal-house hotel near Rembrandtplein. The **Toren,** a plush four-star with red bedspreads, antiques, fireplaces, and crystal chandeliers, also has a pocket-sized garden for sniffing roses and tip-toeing through tulips. Westerkerk is nearby, in case you want to tie the knot before (or after) parting the thick curtains here. The marble entrance hall is nearly 400 years old, and if the breakfast room with the molded, painted ceiling ain't romantic, nothing is ("Hey, aren't those cupids flying around up there?").

Rooms with a view... There are no skyscrapers or tall buildings in central Amsterdam, and the only high-rise hotels are so far out that the scenery isn't worth seeing. This is a flat city of intimate, keyhole views—a tree-lined bend in a canal, a stretch of wide river—rather than Empire State Building–style oohs and ahs. The **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** luxuriates on the east bank of the Amstel River, just south of the old locks that regulate the flow of water through the city's canals, and from the rooms' French windows, guests have a panorama of river traffic, city lights, and drawbridges. The **Hotel de l'Europe** also overlooks the Amstel River and some rooms have loveseat-size riverside balconies—make sure you get one so you can watch the trams slink by and the private boats pull up to the hotel's dock. The **Seven Bridges,** a small canal-house hotel, gets a special mention because it overlooks Reguliersgracht, one of the city's prettiest waterways; you'll actually get 15 bridges at a glimpse, but who's counting? Another upscale canal house, **Estheréa,** has several beautifully redecorated rooms with large windows three-abreast looking out at gorgeous Singel houses and mansions, while the **Ambassade** does much the same over the Herengracht or Singel.

Home away from home... You can count the actual B&Bs in town on the fingers of one hand, though simple Dutch hotels practically qualify as B&Bs because breakfast bread, ham, and cheese are generally included in the price of the room. A small guesthouse-residence does, however, fit the bill. The simply named but sumptuous **Nr 40** doesn't call itself a B&B, but functions like one. Affable owner Tony van der Veen converted the 1893 Herenhuis mansion, one block from the northern edge of Vondelpark's panhandle, into four full-service studio apartments, rentable by the day, week, or longer. Each room has a minibar, fax/answering machine, and stereo. Chic designer furniture mixes with antiques. And the number is no longer quite accurate, since an expansion into the next-door house (number 42) added two large, split-level one-bedroom apartments with a shared garden.

Convention hotels with flair... The **NH Barbizon Palace** is a city within a city, including a conference center in the startlingly handsome, 15th-century St. Olof's chapel across the street, reached via a tunnel. Unconventional conventioneers will be delighted to know that the Red-Light District and S&M/gay Warmoesstraat (a kind of sleazyish Red-Light District street with a few establishments that raise the tone) are a block away (more conventional ones will want to steer clear), and though it's sanitized, the hotel's Bar Bizonder is an improvement on the kind of coffee shop found in most convention hotels. The **Renaissance Amsterdam** also has a former church now used as a convention center (is business a religion around here, or what?): the circular, 17th-century domed Lutheran Koepelkerk, the only wholly round building in town. A Marriott property, this thoroughly American-style complex is shoehorned into a series of converted warehouses and other buildings just off the Singel, near Centraal Station. Saying that it has charm would be stretching it—this is a business hotel, after all, but Marriott has redecorated with coziness (and red) as a theme, and quirky architecture adds interest.

To relive the Golden Age... If you want to know what the canal house of a wealthy Netherlands family probably looked like circa the late 1700s, book a room at **Ambassade,**

on Herengracht's snooty Golden Bend. Antiques dealers' hands tremble when they spot the 1750 grandfather clock by celebrated clockmaker Jan Theo van Kempen in the salon (little ships dance on the waves as the seconds tick by). A china cabinet displays delftware and other valuable pieces that would make handsome souvenirs, if only you could convince the hotel's owner, a collector, to part with them.

In search of the perfect pool... Amsterdam is not a city for hotel-bound sports fanatics. Most buildings are centuries old, and space is at a premium, so most hotels simply don't have room for fitness centers and pools. The pool at the **Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam** is arguably the city's best, an admittedly smaller version of the one at Hearst Castle. The hotel also sports a big Jacuzzi, a sauna and Turkish bath, and a rather modest weight room, and employs a small army of muscular masseurs, beauticians, and trainers to pummel and pamper you. The **Hotel de l'Europe** has fallen behind in terms of sheer luxury, but it has a pond-sized colonnaded pool with a coffered ceiling (with some nutty garden statuary scattered around). Sybarites staying at the **Grand Sofitel Demeure** are probably more interested in trying out the Molton Brown aromatherapy bath milk in their two-tone Art Deco marble bathrooms; nonetheless, hidden under the 600-year-old complex's beautiful courtyards in the heart of Old Amsterdam is the grandly named "Spa at The Grand," which offers a smallish pool not intended for swimming laps and a serviceable sauna and steam bath. It's not a bad place to sweat off the pounds you put on by eating at the Café Roux (a determinedly trendy restaurant at the Grand). The **Sheraton Amsterdam Airport,** a brief stroke or two from the airport, also offers a pretty good swimming pool.

The royal treatment... The owners of the multigenerational, family-run **Estheréa** may be sartorial look-alikes for Prince Willem Alexander and his bride Máxima, but sisters Esther and Caroline Esselaar are a mine of info on restaurants and culture in Amsterdam, and brother Jan-Willem and his desk staff remember your name and room number, are authentically friendly, and never seem obsequious. Free coffee and tea are served in the lobby. At the

Acacia, Hans and Marlene van Vliet will draw you up lists of their favorite restaurants, cafes, parks, herring stands, canals, foods, books, hairdressers, and more. Coming from hotelier families, they seem to have hospitality in their blood. Many of their clients are repeat customers who appreciate the laid-back atmosphere of this small, extremely simple hotel with triangular rooms (it's a corner building, shaped like a wedge of cheese). You can also rent a houseboat from them. If you're really nice, they might even invite you for a ride on their motorboat. The quiet but efficient staff of the **Bridge** are the kind of folks who seem genuinely honored (and somewhat surprised) to have such nice people like you as guests. This modest property (don't be fooled by the misleadingly grand marble entrance) looks out on the locks on the Amstel River that control the flow of Amsterdam's canal water. A handful of the large, spare, casually decorated rooms and new top-floor apartment offer views of the river or Nieuwe Prinsengracht canal.

For cheap sleeps... Don't bother to take your hiking boots off before tramping up to the **Acacia:** You'll need them to scale the Matterhorn of a staircase. Its superb location—in the Jordaan, overlooking peaceful Lijnbaansgracht—offsets the spartan lodgings. The **Van Onna,** on Bloemgracht, is good and cheap; though rooms are tiny, the staircases are plenty wide to allow for giant tortoise-style packs to get through. On the posh Herengracht, the one-star **Hegra** (no elevator) has supremely simple, plain, sturdy furniture in the rooms, which are small with beamed ceilings. The **Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel** is the quintessential place for penurious students and sandal-shod young bikers. Rooms are spartan but neat as a pin, and there's a no-drugs policy. You can buy your daily picnic at the nearby Albert Cuypstraat street market. Cheapest of all (though you might not sleep) are the dormitory-style **Bulldog Low Budget Hotel** and **Kabul Young Budget Hotel.** Good luck! Former cheap sleepers who've come into some cash could try out the **Arena,** out in Amsterdam East. You'll still see some kids toting backpacks here, but they're a better class of backpack than those that clog corridors in the city's hostels and cheap hotels.

Lavender lodgings... Amsterdam's hotels are used to welcoming people of myriad sexual persuasions, and many small, charming hotels here are gay-owned or -managed. It's illegal for a proprietor to deny lodging due to sexual orientation; this goes both ways. A dozen or so self-styled gay hotels in town may discourage straights from staying in them (some are hardcore places for S&M aficionados, and others practice or tolerate male prostitution). Most other gay properties are simply hotels that happen to be plugged into the gay circuit, though the atmosphere is such that if you're not one of the guys or girls, you might feel uncomfortable. The **Seven Bridges** is considered particularly gay-friendly, though it's not a gay hotel per se, but rather an unpretentious canal-house hotel, a small one-star charmer down the block from Rembrandtplein and within shouting distance of gay-prominent Reguliersdwarsstraat.

Party scenes... Most Amsterdam party hotels are in the Red-Light District and specialize in beyond-the-pale activities. If you want to book into one, just slip on your leather and chains, pack your condoms, and fill your pockets with joints. Don't worry, you can't miss them. The rest is up to you. Or, you can nibble at the edges of exotica by staying at the **Kabul Young Budget Hotel,** stuffed into an old building on the gay stretch of Warmoesstraat in the Red-Light District. Rooms range from monastic singles to 16-bed dormitories equipped with lockers and not much else. The **Bulldog Low Budget Hotel,** above a smoking coffee shop, is redolent of grass and hash, lit by fluorescent lights, and offers bunk beds with a 24-hour rotation of gamey puffers. Zounds! In either of these hotels, sleep should not be a priority, and anyone squeamish about body or dope odors will want to look elsewhere. Hey, the price is right, though, and you asked for it. A far better bet is the designerish **Arena,** way out east near the Tropenmuseum. The hotel's continental cafe-restaurant To Dine looks a little like an upgraded cafeteria on the inside, but has a great alfresco terrace in the garden and an attached bar, To Drink. Hotel guests get discounted admission to the in-house nightclub, Tonight, which plays music from the 1960s onward in an old orphanage chapel. The Arena is a bit removed from the center, but isn't too far away, and the traffic is two-way, since youthful revelers head out here from the center to the nightspot and the outdoor cafe.

Family values... You can wheel the rented station wagon right into the garage at the **Renaissance Amsterdam** and feel at home. After all, this is a Marriott hotel, and the kiddies will never know they've left the theme park. They'll also have a blast running through the huge lobby and tripping up all the dazed conventioneers in the round 17th-century Koepel church congress center (a sort of convention center set in the 17th-century domed Lutheran church, Ronde Lutherse Koepelkerk, which now belongs to the hotel). The location, a few hundred yards from Centraal Station, means easy access to trams and trains and buses. For moms and pops with money to burn, the **NH Barbizon Palace** is another sort of theme park—corporate Dutch—with 19 rebuilt old houses kids can explore. The proximity of the Red-Light District, a block or so away, is no problem, since Centraal Station is across the street, with trams, trains, and so forth to all the places you'll want to go, including the zoo. There's a top-flight coffee shop–style restaurant for the well behaved, and don't overlook the souvenir shop in the lobby.

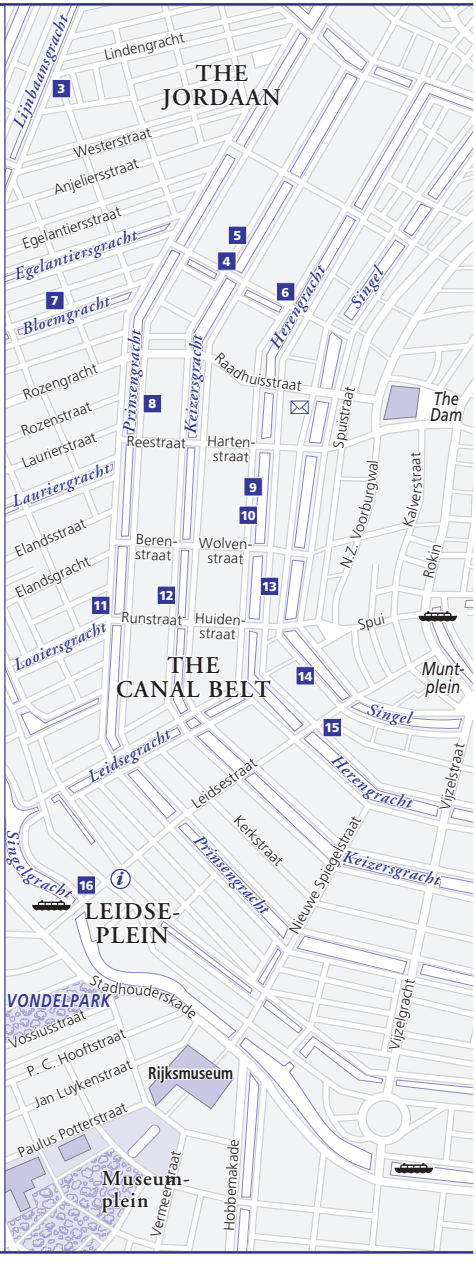
No such attractions are found at the **Estheréa,** but the Esselaar family likes kids, has produced many of late, and has equipped nine beautifully redecorated rooms with spiffy Murphy beds that brats get a kick out of. The big, comfy, practical rooms are furnished with child-resistant wooden built-ins. Extra beds, and children's toys, are also available. The double sinks will come in handy, no doubt, and so will the elevator (only a handful of canal-house hotels have one). Though there's no restaurant, the desk staff can order in food for you if you're too exhausted to go out (or grab takeout from the fab Mykonos-style Traiterie Grekas [see p. 75] a couple of doors along), and kids will love the croissants that are part of the Dutch breakfast (not included in the room price). Across town at the **Owl,** near Vondelpark, you'll be happy to discover a small backyard in which to turn the children loose. This small, family-run, three-star hotel is in a converted turn-of-the-century mansion, which has been so thoroughly transformed that you might be in a pastel Miami resort hotel. Best of all, it's on a quiet residential street, safe from traffic hazards, with the park one block away (it's minutes from the Museum District, if your youngsters are so inclined).

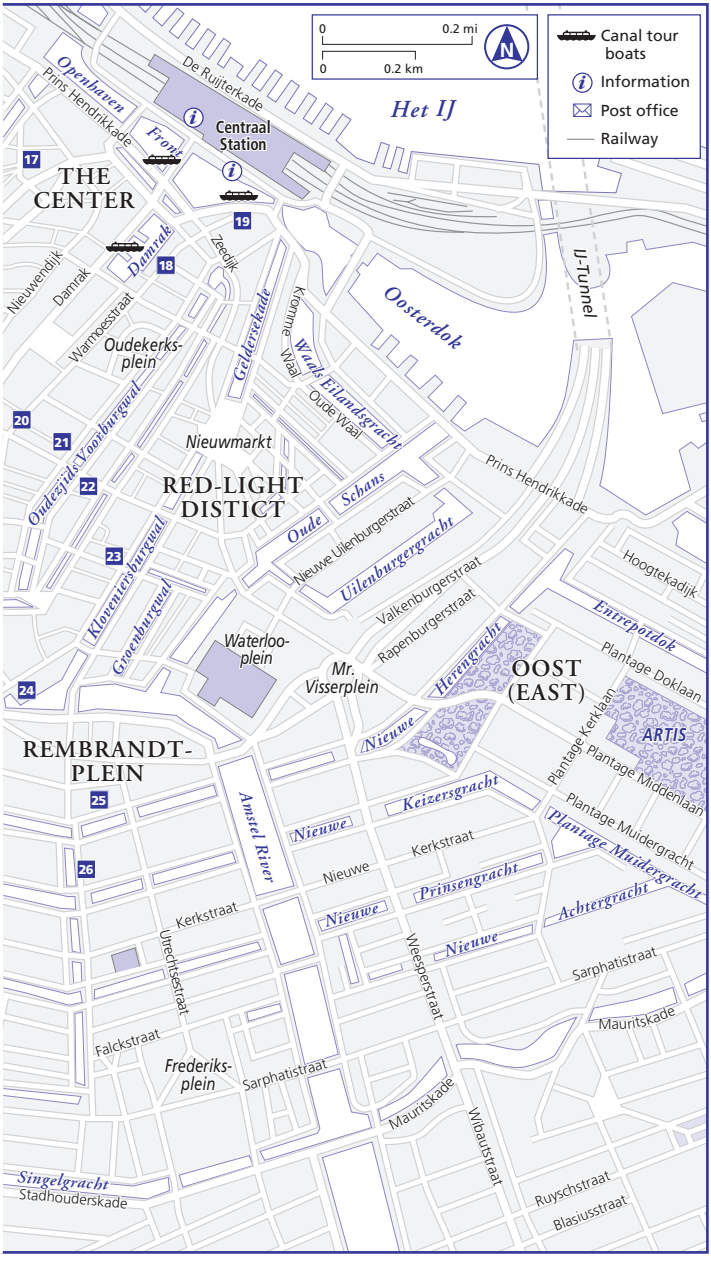
When you've got a plane to catch... Schiphol Airport is so close to town, and so well served by trains, buses, and freeways, that it's ridiculous to stay there just to shave 15 minutes off your travel time. The same goes for the huge RAI convention center, which is nearby. Sure, there's a fleet of boring airport hotels 5 minutes away from the departures hall and 7 minutes from RAI, but you can get to either place in less than half an hour from just about any hotel in central or south Amsterdam. However, if you insist on being within earshot of whining jet engines, or are simply passing through town on the way to another destination, opt for the **Sheraton Amsterdam Airport,** a vast business/luxury hotel right outside the airport. You get a pool and fitness center, plus tennis and squash courts, and you can just about roll out of the bar and board your flight. A cheaper option is the **Ibis Amsterdam Airport,** a French-run, anonymous modern hotel housed in a tinted-glass cube. The facilities are adequate, and there's a free airport shuttle.

When everything else is filled... "Bigger is better" must have been the motto of the people who built the **Renaissance Amsterdam,** a sprawling, American-owned property filling several skillfully converted warehouses and other buildings. With 400-plus comfortable, if bland, modern rooms (totaling over 500 beds), they'll almost always be able to find space for you, no matter how many conventioneers they have under their roof. It's only a few hundred yards from Centraal Station and has a garage, which comes in handy if you're driving through town. Faded, sprawling **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky** gets first prize for total number of beds (almost 900). Little did the Polish tailor-turned-hotelier who founded this landmark property in 1866 know that his name, writ rather large, would now be spread across several city blocks, between the Dam and the Red-Light District. If you're set on canal-house charm, the **Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer** has the most rooms (230) and beds (338) of all the canal-house hotels—it can't hurt to check here for last-minute cancellations.

Map 3: Central Amsterdam Accommodations

- Acacia **3**
- Agora **15**
- Ambassade **13**
- Amsterdam Wiechmann **11**
- Blakes **12**
- Bulldog Low Budget Hotel **21**
- Canal House **5**
- Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American **16**
- Estherea **10**
- Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam **22**
- Hegra **9**
- Hotel de l'Europe **24**
- Kabul Young Budget Hotel **18**
- NH Barbizon Palace **19**
- NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky **20**
- NH Schiller **25**
- Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam **23**
- Renaissance Amsterdam **17**
- Seven Bridges **26**
- Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer **8**
- 't Hotel **6**
- Toren **4**
- Van Onna **7**
- Waterfront **14**

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Openhaven
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Nieuwendijk
Zeedijk
Oosterdok
IJ-Tunnel
Geldersekade
Kromme Waal
Oude Waal
Waals-Eilandsgracht
Warmoesstraat
Oudekerks-plein
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23
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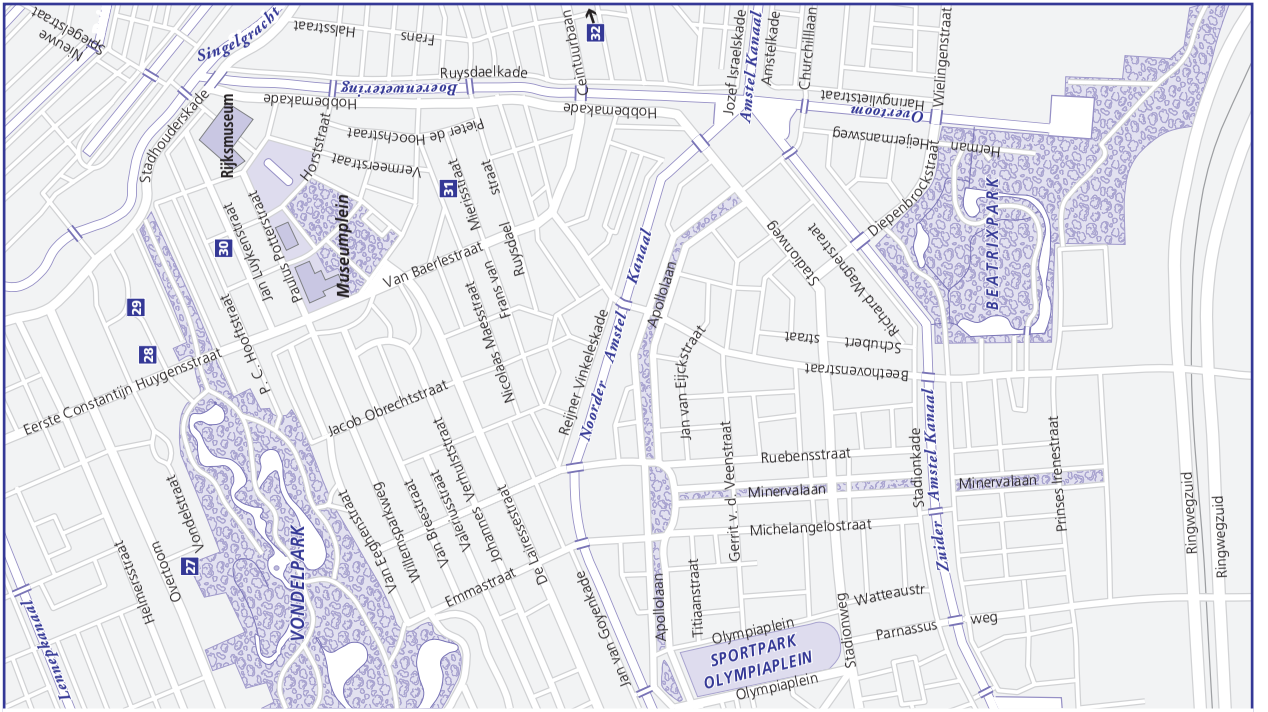
25
26
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Nieuwmarkt
RED-LIGHT DISTICT
Schans
Oude
Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat
Uilenburgergracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Hoogtekadijk
Entrepotdok
Plantage Doklaan
Oudezijds Kolveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Waterloo-plein
Mr. Visserplein
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Herengracht
OOST (EAST)
ARTIS
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
Plantage Muidergracht
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Amstel River
Nieuwe
Keizersgracht
Kerkstraat
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
Utrechtsestraat
Weesperstraat
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Falckstraat
Frederiks-plein
Wibautstraat
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade

Map 4: Southern Amsterdam Accommodations

Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken **30**
De Filosoof **27**
Nr 40 **28**
Owl **29**
Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel **32**
Washington **31**


Nieuwe Spiegelstraat
Singelgracht
Halsstraat
Frans
Ruysdaelkade
Boerenwetering
Hobbemakade
Stadhouderskade
Rijksmuseum
Horststraat
Peter de Hoochstraat
Vermeerstraat
Museumplein
Paulus Potterstraat
Jan Luykenstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Weverstraat
Ruysdael straat
Frans van Nicolaes Maesstraat
Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat
C.P. Hooftstraat
Jacob Obrechtstraat
Nicolaes Reijnier Vinkeleskade
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Jan van Eijckstraat
Schubert straat
Beethovenstraat
Ruebensstraat
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Gerrit v. d. Veenstraat
Stadionkade
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Vondelstraat
Vondelpark
Van Eeghenstraat
Willemsparkweg
Van Beuningenstraat
Valeriusstraat
Van Vollenhovenstraat
Jorislaan
Emmastraat
De Lairessestraat
Jan van Goyenkade
Titiaanstraat
Olympiaplein
SPORTPARK OLYMPIAPLEIN
Stadionweg
Watteaustr
Parnassusweg
Lennepkanaal
Helsinkistraat
Overtoom
Amstelkade
Churchilllaan
Wielingenstraat
Hobbemakade
Jozef Israelskade
Amstel Kanaal
Haringvlietstraat
Heijermansweg
Diepenbrockstraat
Richard Wagnerstraat
Stadionweg
BEATRIXPARK
Celsiusbaan
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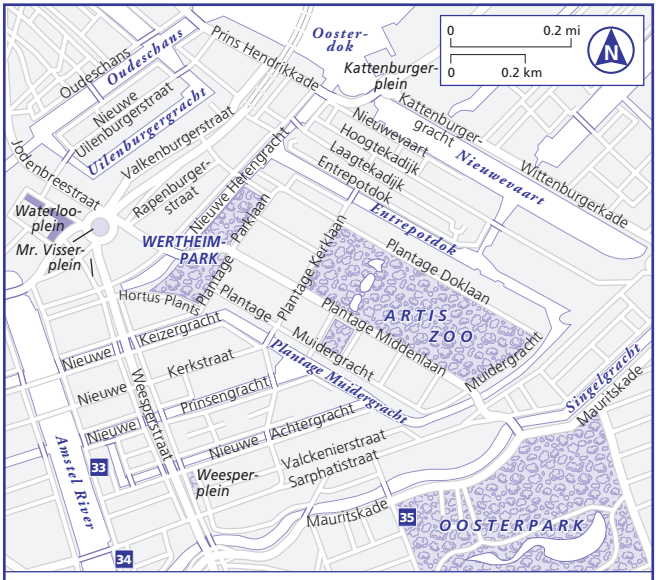
Map 5: Eastern Amsterdam Accommodations



Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam **34**

Arena **35**

Bridge **33**

The Index

Note:	1€ = $1.15 U.S.
$$$$$	over 260€/$300
$$$$	170€–260€/$200–$300
$$$	108€–170€/$125–$200
$$	43€–108€/$50–$125
$	under 43€/$50

Price ratings are based on the lowest price quoted for a standard double room in high season, including taxes and charges. Unless otherwise noted, rooms have air-conditioning, phones, private baths, and TVs.

Note: Four- and five-star hotels in Amsterdam often charge an additional 5% city tax.

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express
DISC	Discover
DC	Diners Club
MC	MasterCard
V	Visa

Acacia (p. 37, 39, 42) JORDAAN This flatiron-shaped, family-run hotel has strictly spartan rooms, but a great location overlooking the leafy but by no means stylish Lijnbaansgracht canal. At slightly higher rates, houseboat and studio apartment rentals are also available. No elevator.... *Tel 020/622-1460. Fax 020/638-0748. Lindengracht 251 at Lijnbaansgracht, 1015 KH. Tram 3 to Nieuwe Willemstraat. 18 units, including 2 studios and 2 houseboats (no A/C). MC, V (5% surcharge). $*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 3.

Agora (p. 31) CANAL BELT A small, comfortable canal-house hotel near the flower market, run by Els Bruijnse and Yvo Muthert. Many rooms have been remodeled and upgraded since 2001. No elevator.... *Tel 020/627-2200. Fax 020/627-2202. www.hotelagora.nl. Singel 462 at Koningsplein, 1017 AW. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. 16 units (15 with bathroom; no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 15.

Ambassade **(p. 26, 31, 32, 35, 38, 39, 40)** CANAL BELT Twelve gorgeous, 17th-century canal houses on the so-called Golden Bend of Herengracht, the Algonquin of Amsterdam. Rushdie, Boyle, Ford, Seth, and Le Carré are among the literary lights who stay here. No pretentions; discreet class; library. "Float & Massage" spa next door. Elevator to some rooms.... *Tel 020/555-0222. Fax 020/555-0277. www.ambassade-hotel.nl. Herengracht 335–353 between Wolvenstraat and Huidenstraat (across the canal), 1016 AZ. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. 59 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 13.

Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam **(p. 26, 33, 36, 39, 41)** EAST For many, this is the best hotel in town, with more bang for the buck than the Grand. Though located on the eastern bank of the Amstel River beyond Frederiksplein, in an unanchored and rather uninteresting area, the Amstel is perfectly grachtengordel (see explanation on p. 29): Marble grand halls, salons hung with crystal chandeliers, and vast rooms done up in silken fabrics (make sure to get one overlooking the river). High tea is an institution in the handsome upstairs salon, and La Rive restaurant (see p. 76) gets top marks.... *Tel 020/622-6060 (800/327-0200). Fax 020/622-5808. www.interconti.com. Professor Tulpplein 1 at Sarphatistraat, 1018 GX. Trams 6, 7, 10 to Weesperplein. 79 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 5 on p. 50, bullet 34.

Amsterdam Wiechmann **(p. 31, 37)** CANAL BELT A narrow canal-house hotel with a charming lobby straight out of a Vermeer painting. Some *gezellig* canal-side double rooms are furnished with antiques. There's also a bar and lounge.... *Tel 020/626-3321. Fax 020/626-8962. www.hotelwiechmann.nl. Prinsengracht 328–332 at Looiersgracht, 1016 HX. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Prinsengracht. 38 units (no A/C). MC, V. $$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 11.

Arena **(p. 33, 37, 42, 43)** EAST This rambling hotel in a former orphanage has gone upmarket with a bang, marked by designer flair—and far higher room rates. The location may be a tad too far from the center for some tastes, but the Arena carries its own action with it, in the shape of a hot-rep dance club and bar.... *Tel 020/850-2410. Fax 020/850-2415. www.hotelarena.nl. 's-Gravesandestraat 51 at Mauritskade, 1092 AA Amsterdam. Trams 7, 10 to Korte 's-Gravesandestraat. 121 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 5 on p. 50, bullet 35.

Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken **(p. 35)** MUSEUM DISTRICT This Dutch Art Nouveau four-star—totally remodeled in 2001—is within striking distance of the designer boutiques on P.C. Hooftstraat. There's a pretty patio garden and a comfortable wine-bar and lounge. Some rooms are nonsmoking. Spa center....

Tel 020/573-0730 (800/641-0300). Fax 020/676-3841. www.janluyken.nl. Jan Luijkenstraat 58 at Honthorststraat, 1071 CS. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat. 62 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 30.

Blakes (p. 26, 33, 37) CANAL BELT Anouska Hempel's ultrachic, 26-room designer hotel (modeled on Blakes and The Hempel in London), where East (Asian furnishings) meets West (English silk and style) in a uniquely neospartan temple to trendiness. Housed in a reconverted 1637 Grachtengordel property (theater, almshouse bakery, then law offices). Garden court, gorgeous public areas haunted by well-heeled, black-clad jet-setters.... *Tel 020/530-2010. Fax 020/530-2030. www.blakesamsterdam.com. Keizersgracht 384 at Runstraat, 1016 GB. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. 26 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 12.

Bridge (p. 37, 42) EAST This small, friendly hotel overlooks the locks on the Amstel River. Rooms and the top-floor apartment are tidy but spare, with linoleum or carpeted floors, rattan chairs, and blond wood furniture. No elevator.... *Tel 020/623-7068. Fax 020/624-1565. www.thebridgehotel.nl. Amstel 107–111 at Nieuwe Prinsengracht, 1018 EM. Tram 4 to Prinsengracht; Metro and trams 6, 7, 10 to Weesperplein. 36 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$–$$$*

See Map 5 on p. 50, bullet 33.

Bulldog Low Budget Hotel (p. 42, 43) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Strip fluorescent lights, the smell of hash and grass wafting up from the smoking coffee shop downstairs, spartan rooms, and dormitories stuffed with bunk beds. No elevator. Talk about *gezellig.... Tel 020/620-3822. Fax 020/627-1612. www.bulldog.nl. Oudezijds Voorburgwal 220 at Damstraat, 1012 GJ. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. 95 beds (no A/C, no phone, no private bathroom, no TV). No credit cards. $*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 21.

Canal House (p. 34, 39) CANAL BELT A young Irish couple runs this hybrid Dutch/Victorian inn, on one of the city's prettiest canals, near Westerkerk church. No kids under 12 or pets are allowed. One of few canal-house hotels with an elevator; there's also a cozy bar.... *Tel 020/622-5182. Fax 020/624-1317. www.canalhouse.nl. Keizersgracht 148 at Leliegracht, 1015 CX. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. 26 units (no A/C). DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 5.

Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American (p. 36) LEIDSEPLEIN A magnificent Dutch Art Nouveau landmark hotel built between 1900 and 1902, overlooking Leidseplein. Unfortunately, the rooms, heavily remodeled and "improved" in the 1980s and 1990s, have lost much of their charm. Fitness center, solarium, and

sauna.... *Tel 020/556-3200 (800/227-6963). Fax 020/556-3222. www.amsterdam-american.crowneplaza.com. Leidsekade 97 at Leidseplein, 1017 PN. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. 174 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 16.

De Filosoof (p. 34) MUSEUM DISTRICT As the name implies, the theme of this unusual small three-star hotel, a stone's throw from Vondelpark, and in an annex across the street, is philosophy. The garden, veranda, and book-lined lounge encourage mingling.... *Tel 020/683-3013. Fax 020/685-3750. www.hotelfilosoof.nl. Anna van den Vondelstraat 6 at Overtoom, 1054 GZ. Tram 1 to Jan Pieter Heijestraat. 38 units (no A/C). AE, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 27.

Estheréa (p. 26, 31, 33, 35, 39, 41, 44) CANAL BELT Family-owned and -run for the last 50-odd years, this canal-house hotel on the Singel is a thoroughly professional property, with many tastefully redecorated rooms. One of few canal-house hotels to boast an elevator.... *Tel 020/624-5146 (800/223-9868). Fax 020/623-9001. www.estherea.nl. Singel 303–309 at Oude Spiegelstraat (across the canal), 1012 WJ. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. 75 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$$–$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 10.

Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam (p. 26, 34, 35, 41) CENTER Possibly Amsterdam's top super-luxury hotel. Exudes confidence, from the marble-paved, vaulted lobby to the immense, tastefully decorated rooms. Pity they've only got 15 nonsmoking rooms.... *Tel 020/555-3111 (800/SOFITEL). Fax 020/555-3222. www.thegrand.nl. Oudezijds Voorburgwal 197 at Oude Doelenstraat, 1012 EX. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. 182 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 22.

Hegra (p. 31, 42) CANAL BELT Modest is the operative word for this narrow, 17th-century canal-house hotel located on the Herengracht near the Dam, the flower market, and Leidseplein. No elevator.... *Tel 020/623-7877. Fax 020/623-8159. Herengracht 269 at Hartenstraat (across the canal), 1016 BJ. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. 11 units (6 with bathroom; no A/C, no TV). AE, DC, MC, V. $*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 9.

Hotel de l'Europe (p. 26, 34, 36, 39, 41) CENTER This 1896 grande dame offers an excellent, though noisy, location at Muntplein overlooking the Amstel, plus all the trappings of luxury. The lobby and many rooms have been remodeled and upgraded in the last 5 years.... *Tel 020/531-1777 (800/223-6800). Fax 020/531-1778. www.leurope.nl. Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2–8 at Muntplein, 1012 CP. Trams 4, 9, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. 100 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 24.

Ibis Amsterdam Airport (p. 45) SCHIPHOL AIRPORT Reasonably priced and near the airport, this is a standard, modern chain hotel, with no character but perfectly good facilities for travelers in transit. Free airport shuttle. Red Baron Bar (the name tells all); gift shops.... *Tel 020/502-5100. Fax 020/657-0199. www.ibishotel.com. Schipholweg 181. Train to Schiphol, then taxi or shuttle. 832 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$–$$$*

See Map 2 on p. 24, bullet 1.

Kabul Young Budget Hotel (p. 42, 43) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT An Amsterdam institution. Not for light sleepers. No elevator.... *Tel 020/623-7158. Fax 020/620-0869. Warmoesstraat 38–42 at Oude Brugsteeg, 1012 JE. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. 23 units (no A/C, no phone, no private bathroom, no TV). No credit cards. $*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 18.

NH Barbizon Palace (p. 32, 35, 40, 44) CENTER There's something for everyone in this quintessentially Dutch theme park of a business hotel. The neutrally attired rooms have thick, flowery curtains and old oak rafters. Remodeled in recent years, with about 45 nonsmoking rooms.... *Tel 020/556-4564. Fax 020/624-3353. www.nh-hoteles.com. Prins Hendrikkade 59–72 at Zeedijk, 1012 AD. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. 275 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 19.

NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky (p. 32, 33, 36, 45) CENTER The most exclusive place in town, it's now a business, convention, and package-tourism hotel, comfortable if undistinguished. The plant-filled Winter Garden (1879) is still a joy in winter, and the Reflet Brasserie has a striking 1883 decor; otherwise, the hotel's bars and restaurants are forgettable. 95 nonsmoking rooms.... *Tel 020/554-9111. Fax 020/622-8607. www.nh-hoteles.com. Dam 9 at Damrak, 1012 JS. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. 468 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 20.

NH Schiller (p. 38) REMBRANDTPLEIN Gorgeous turn-of-the-20th-century hotel overlooking Rembrandtplein. Square-side rooms have the best views, but can get noisy.... *Tel 020/554-0700. Fax 020/624-0098. www.nh-hoteles.com. Rembrandtplein 26–36, 1017 CV. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. 92 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 25.

Nr 40 (p. 40) MUSEUM DISTRICT This luxury B&B offers four full-service studio apartments, an elegant dining room, wood-paneled lounge, and a small roof garden. (Next door are two split-level, one-bedroom garden apartments with faxes and answering machines, but these are rented long-term and are

rarely available.) No elevator.... *Tel/fax 020/618-4298. www.number40.scarlet.nl. Roemer Visscherstraat 40 at Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat, 1054 EZ. Trams 1, 6 to Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat; 3, 12 to Overtoom. 4 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 28.

Owl **(p. 37, 44)** MUSEUM DISTRICT A converted turn-of-the-20th-century mansion, this family-run, three-star hotel is tidy and pastel, and no nonsense. TV lounge/bar and garden.... *Tel 020/618-9484. Fax 020/618-9441. www.owl-hotel.nl. Roemer Visscherstraat 1 at Tesselschadestraat, 1054 EV. Trams 1, 6 to Stadhouderskade. 34 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 29.

Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam **(p. 35, 38)** CENTER Even though it's just south of the Red-Light District in Old Amsterdam, it looks like it could be anywhere.... *Tel 020/520-8300 (800/333-3333). Fax 020/520-8200. www.radissonsas.com. Rusland 17 at Oudezijds Achterburgwal, 1012 CK. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. 243 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$–$$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 23.

Renaissance Amsterdam **(p. 32, 35, 40, 44, 45)** CENTER Owned by Marriott since 1999, this is a huge, sprawling, American business hotel composed of reconverted warehouses. The round, 17th-century Koepel church is used for conventions, and there's a covered courtyard. The charm factor has been improved with red decor, old prints and paintings, and cozy furniture.... *Tel 020/621-2223 (800/HOTELS-1). Fax 020/623-7742. www.renaissancehotels.com. Kattengat 1 at Spuistraat, 1012 SZ. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. 405 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$–$$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 17.

Seven Bridges **(p. 31, 39, 43)** CANAL BELT This *gezellig* canal-house hotel has gone upmarket, with only eight remodeled rooms (inlaid wood, marble, and handmade furniture). No elevator.... *Tel 020/623-1329. Reguliersgracht 31 at Keizersgracht, 1017 LK. Tram 4 to Keizersgracht. 8 units (no A/C). AE, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 26.

Sheraton Amsterdam Airport **(p. 41, 45)** SCHIPHOL AIRPORT Best left to visitors in transit, business travelers in a tearing hurry, and to anyone who is so dull as to not be able to find anything to interest them in Amsterdam. The Voyager restaurant is for those too tired to leave the hotel; ditto the Dutch Runway Cafe, the Boomerang Bar, and the Cascade Bar.... *Tel 020/316-4300 (800/325-3535). Fax 020/316-4399. www.sheraton.com/amsterdamair. Schiphol Boulevard 101 at Schiphol Plaza, 1118 BG Schiphol Airport. Trains to Schiphol Airport. 408 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 2 on p. 24, bullet 2.

Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer **(p. 32, 38, 45)** CANAL BELT The only full-blown luxury hotel in the Grachtengordel neighborhood; the restrained decor is lovely in an opulent, corporate way, though it's still less atmospheric than other canal-house hotels.... *Tel 020/523-5235 (800/325-3589). Fax 020/627-6753. www.luxurycollection.com. Prinsengracht 315–331 at Westermarkt, 1016 GZ. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. 230 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 8.

't Hotel **(p. 31, 33)** CANAL BELT Opened in 2000, this charming three-star overlooking the leafy Leliegracht canal near the Jordaan has luxury rooms done in a neo-Calvinistic, minimalist style: simple wooden furniture, cream-colored walls, burgundy carpets, and tiled baths. The lobby doubles as an antiques shop. No elevator.... *Tel 020/422-2741. Fax 020/626-7873. www.thotel.nl. Leliegracht 18 at Herengracht, 1015 DE. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. 8 units. AE, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 6.

Toren **(p. 31, 33, 35, 39)** CANAL BELT This four-star, two-building canal-house hotel with elevator has a marble entrance hall, Old Dutch decor, crystal chandeliers, fireplaces, and an attractive garden.... *Tel 020/622-6352. Fax 020/626-9705. www.toren.nl. Keizersgracht 164 at Leliegracht, 1015 CZ. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. 40 units. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 4.

Van Onna **(p. 38, 42)** JORDAAN This unusual one-star occupies three separate buildings on a lovely side canal. From front rooms you get canal views and glimpses of the Westerkerk over the roofs. Lounge. No elevator.... *Tel 020/626-5801. Bloemgracht 102–104 and 108 at Prinsengracht, 1015 TN. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. 39 units (30 with bathroom; no A/C, no TV). No credit cards. $$*

See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 7.

Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel **(p. 38, 42)** OLD SOUTH Rooms in this narrow, turn-of-the-20th-century building are tidy but spartan. No elevator (and the stairs are steep).... *Tel 020/679-3452. Fax 020/671-5213. www.bicyclehotel.com. Van Ostadestraat 123 at Ferdinand Bolstraat, 1072 SV. Tram 3 to Ferdinand Bolstraat; 12, 16, 24, 25 to Ceintuurbaan. 16 units (8 with bathroom; no A/C). No credit cards. $$*

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 32.

Washington **(p. 34)** MUSEUM DISTRICT Clean and classy, the simple, tasteful rooms here overlook a verdant street or an intimate garden. No elevator.... *Tel 020/679-7453. Fax 020/673-4435. www.hotelwashington.nl. Frans van Mierisstraat 10 at Johannes Vermeerstraat, 1071 RS. Tram 16 to Johannes Vermeerplein. 17 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 4 on p. 48, bullet 31.

Waterfront **(p. 31)** CANAL BELT Overlooking the Singel a hundred yards from the flower market, this narrow canal-house hotel has cheerful owners who've remodeled top to bottom.... *Tel/fax 020/421-6621. www.waterfront.nl. Singel 458 at Koningsplein, 1017 AW. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. 11 units (no A/C). AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

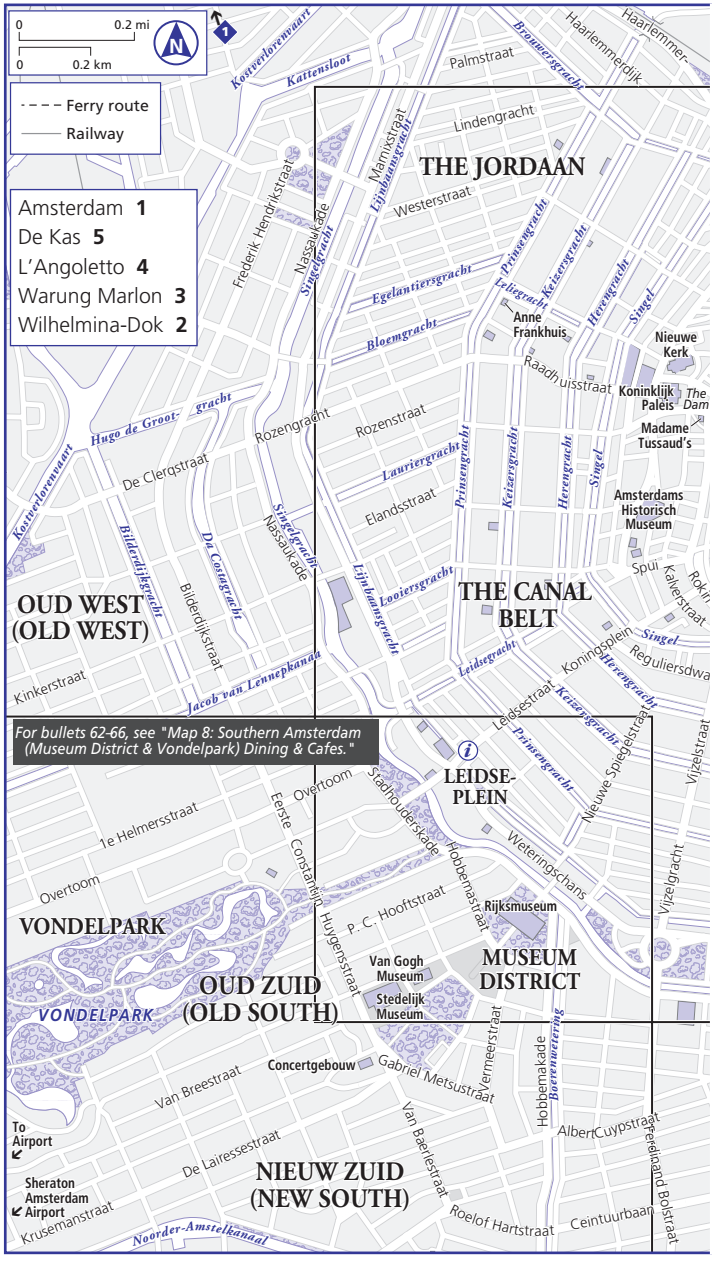
See Map 3 on p. 46, bullet 14.

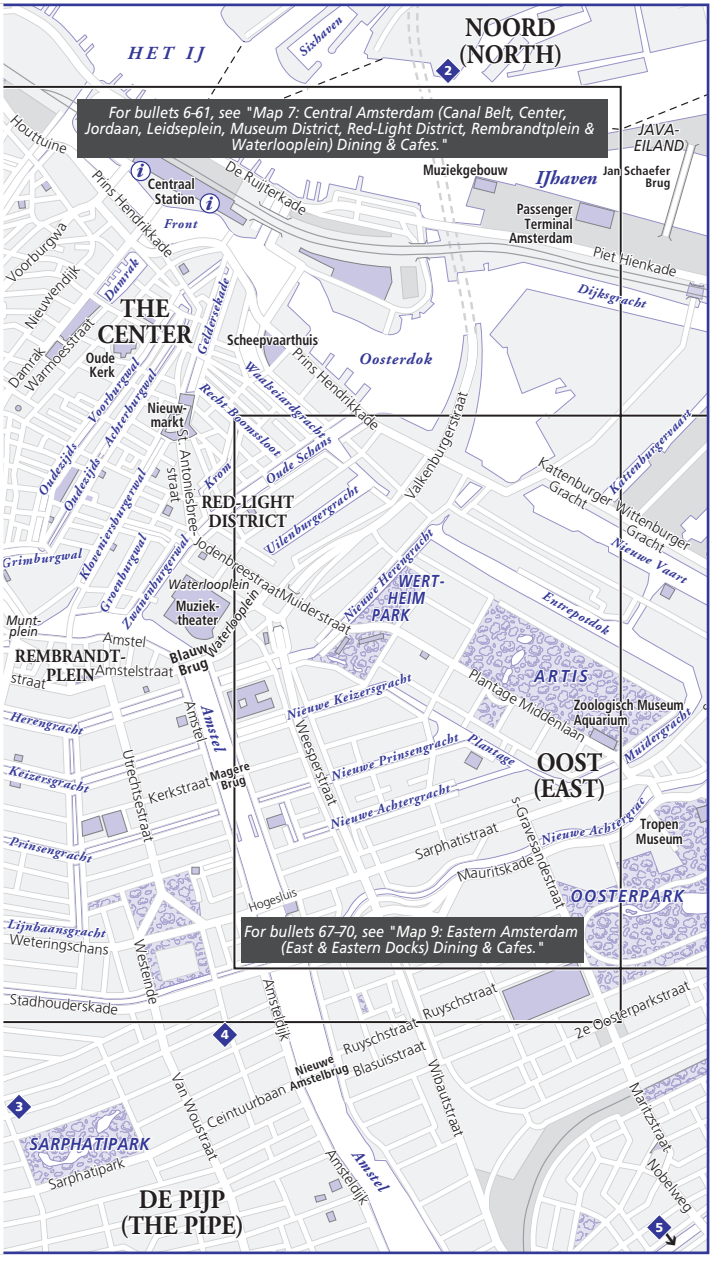
DINING

& CAFES

2

Map 6: Amsterdam Dining & Cafes




HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD (NORTH)
2
For bullets 6-61, see "Map 7: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Museum District, Red-Light District, Rembrandtplein & Waterlooplein) Dining & Cafes."
Houttuine
JAVA-EILAND
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer Brug
Centraal Station
Prins Hendrikkade
De Ruijterkade
Front
Passenger Terminal Amsterdam
Piet Heinkade
Dijksgracht
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
THE CENTER
Geldersekade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Oude Kerk
Warmoesstraat
Waaleilandsgracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Nieuw-markt
Recht Boomssloot
Oude Schans
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburgergracht
Wittenburger Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
Valkenburgerstraat
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Uilenburgergracht
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Oudeschans
Waterlooplein
Jodenbreestraat
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-HEIM PARK
Entrepotdok
Muntplein
Muziek-theater
Amstel
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Amstelstraat
Blauwbrug
Herengracht
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Amstel
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum Aquarium
Muidergracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere Brug
Weesperstraat
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Plantage
OOST (EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
s-Gravesandestraat
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Tropen Museum
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
For bullets 67-70, see "Map 9: Eastern Amsterdam (East & Eastern Docks) Dining & Cafes."
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westeinde
Stadhouderskade
Amstelsluis
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
4
Nieuwe Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
Wibautstraat
Martzstraat
Nobelweg
3
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amsteldijk
DE PIJP (THE PIPE)
5

Basic Stuff

Dutch food and Amsterdam restaurants are the butt of a lot of jokes—only some of them deserved. The city's cafes are better than its eateries, the saying goes. And the truth is, Amsterdam's more than 1,400 cafes and bars—among the most atmospherically smoky, friendly, cozy, pleasantly worn in the world—are a hard act to follow. Also true is that a lot of traditional Dutch food is heavy, consisting of meat and vegetable stews, sausages, potatoes and gravy, and plenty of bland cheese. Unlike Italians or French, locals dining out here *avoid* local food, favoring Indonesian, French, Italian, Asian, and other foreign specialties (there are 145 nationalities in town) or fusion mergers thereof. In the last 15 years, though, the once-dreary restaurant scene has become surprisingly dynamic, roller-coastering from the sublime to the ridiculous. You really can get a good meal here at a variety of both international and homegrown restaurants—but you can also spend a lot of money on bad, silly, or contrived food. Still, it's nonsense to claim, as do other Europeans (the French in particular), that there is no such thing as "Dutch cuisine."

Veteran food guru Johannes van Dam (see the "Van Dam vs. Iens" box below) has a collection of centuries-old Dutch cookbooks describing dishes that would send a modern French chef to culinary heaven. Members of the Dutch Regional Cuisine organization (Neerlands Dis) are reviving lost recipes, ingredients, wines, liquors, and cooking techniques from the various regions of the Netherlands. Dozens of flavorful finds include dishes like smoke-dried *nagelhout* beef, braised codfish with mustard sauce, and marrowfat peas with onions, bacon, and pickles. The real dynamism lies, however, with several dozen chefs—Dutch, French, and Indonesian—producing dishes at hip Amsterdam restaurants that would fit right into the foodie scene in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Sydney. For these chefs, variations on northern Italian, French, and Asian themes—sometimes mixed and matched—are all the rage. Handled by skilled practitioners, these variations can be world-class. Fusion remains the trend of the early 21st century; sometimes the results are more confused than anything else. ***And be warned:*** Service is almost universally slow and often sloppy. Everyone knows that Amsterdam's restaurants, with few exceptions, are "understaffed with overpaid amateurs."

Only in Amsterdam

Fish, fish, and more fish. The staggering wealth of the 17th-century Dutch Golden Age was based in large part on herrings.

The Dutch eat them raw and pickled in a variety of ways. Try them at one of the dozens of herring stands *(herringhuis)* scattered around town. Other Atlantic and North Sea fish are on many menus, and they're generally fresh and delicious. Among snack foods, *osseworst* is a delicious smoked beef sausage eaten cold, like salami. The beef or shrimp croquette *(krokette)* is a local obsession. At their worst, these large, gooey dumplings rolled in diamond-hard crumbs, then deep fried, taste like instant gravy mix. They're always served scorching hot; Amsterdammers split them open, place them on a slice of white bread, then add mustard and/or fried parsley. Small, round vegetable-paste croquettes are called *bitterballen* and are a favorite hors d'oeuvre.

Locally you can find dozens of cheeses, including the ubiquitous Edam and Gouda. You can also find delicious aged varieties, and others made with raw milk *(boerenkaas),* hidden treasures that aren't available abroad. These cheeses, plus various cold cuts, go into the standard Dutch lunch, which consists of small, often round sandwiches—*broodjes*—that would be considered a mere snack or finger food in most other countries.

The most celebrated dish hereabouts is *stamppot,* a vast mound of mashed potatoes and gravy, usually served with endive, sauerkraut, or kale, plus pork ribs and sausages. Don't forget *erwtensoep,* pea soup, that perennial winter favorite; it should be thick enough to hold a spoon upright. A lighter

Van Dam vs. Iens

Amsterdam guru of gastronomy Johannes van Dam has a mission: to reward talented chefs and encourage others to improve. Improving sometimes means changing jobs. So, while the pneumatic tire man of the Michelin red guide makes chefs tremble in France, it is bearded, Bibendum-like van Dam whose reviews in the daily Het Parool can make or break an Amsterdam restaurant. He uses a 10-point system. There is nothing worse than being "van damned" with a low score. All-time lows have gone to the Reflet Brasserie at the NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky (4). Enter Iens Boswijk, a rival reviewer whose "Iens Independent Index" (www.iens.nl) lists most Amsterdam restaurants worth a damn, rating them with Zagat-style assessments and dividing them conveniently into theme categories. Best of all, this pocket-sized guide is available in English at most Amsterdam bookstores and newsstands. Too bad the "nonsmoking" category remains woefully inaccurate: There are practically no nonsmoking restaurants in town worth your patronage. Look for van Dam's reviews—often posted prominently—in the windows of Amsterdam restaurants. The big man is still the city's most reliable restaurant barometer.

favorite in May and June is white Limburg asparagus, eaten with local boiled ham (and sometimes sprinkled with cinnamon or nutmeg).

Dutch pancakes are the sort of comestible brick that has given Dutch food a bad name. Called *pannekoeken* when pizza-sized and *poffertjes* when smaller, they are often gooey and only half-cooked. Toppings include everything under the sun, from curried turkey to pineapple to sweet corn. The less said, the better. Indonesian food from the Netherlands' former colony, the Dutch East Indies, has been thoroughly adopted by Amsterdammers, who consider it their own. You find chicken *sate* (also spelled *sateh* and *satay*) with peanut sauce everywhere, from ethnic eateries to Dutch steakhouses and sidewalk fry shops. The celebrated Indonesian *rijsttafel* (rice table) is a colonial invention, designed to regale Dutch potentates with a mind-boggling parade of 20 or 30 dishes. Indonesia is a vast country, comprising Java, Borneo, and Sulawesi, with dozens of regional cuisines; what you get in Amsterdam is a pan-Indonesian mix of star dishes, most of them Javanese. Try spicy *babi ketjap* (pork in soya sauce) or mild *gado-gado* (vegetables and bean sprouts in peanut sauce). The true test of an Indonesian chef, however, is *rendang padang*—beef with chile and coconut sauce; it should be very spicy and of a creamy but firm consistency.

Local beers include those inexplicably world-famous brews Heineken and Amstel. There are two good microbreweries in town, Bierbrouwerij 't IJ and Brouwhuis Maximiliaan. Dutch Riesling wine, grown near Maastricht, is good but difficult to find. There is only one local producer of *jenever* (Dutch gin), Cees van Wees; his products are available at De Admiraal (a bar/tasting house).

Cafe Society

Cafe culture thrives here as it did 50 years ago in other European capitals, Paris in particular. A lot of Amsterdammers still start their day at their favorite cafe (usually a so-called brown cafe), have lunch there, return for drinks before dinner, and then go back for a bit of socializing, a game of snooker, and some live (or canned) music and a sing-along (see the Nightlife chapter). Of course, all of this is lubricated by aperitifs. The bartender doesn't bother to ask what to pour, and the pool cues are as ubiquitous as the bentwood chairs. Since everyone goes to these cafes, they are the ultimate democratic institutions. You, the street sweeper, drink with the CEOs and politicos and speak your mind about everything from croquettes to geopolitics.

Still Holland's Best Ice Cream

Back in the 1920s, Silvano Tofani's father, Peppino, emigrated to Amsterdam from Lucca, in Tuscany, with a dream: to open an ice cream parlor. As of January 2000 you can read about Peppino's ascension at the Amsterdam Historical Museum. You might reasonably ask why Peppino left Lucca for a city where it rains almost 250 days a year and there is a five-month winter. A silly question: Business boomed. Peppino's colorful carts could be seen all over town in spring and summer. The carts are no longer, but Silvano, born in Tuscany, and his wife, Anelide, took over Peppino's modest ice cream parlor, near the Albert Cuypstraat market, several decades ago and continue the family art. Everything is homemade with fresh produce: strawberries, peaches, zucchinis, rice, and more unexpected ingredients. Silvano has perfected 100 different ice creams, all made with his own recipes. Creamy, light, flavorful—this is possibly the world's best, made with Italian skill and peerless Dutch dairy products. The frothy cappuccinos are unquestionably Amsterdam's most authentic. Best of all, Silvano and Anelide, like their 100 flavors, are as sweet as can be. (Gelateria Italiana Peppino; tel 020/676-4910; Eerste Van Sweelinckstraat 16; daily 11am–11pm, late March to Oct only.)

At last count there were 1,404 cafes and bars in Amsterdam proper; in the "Cafes" section of this chapter, we list only a small selection. Of the four basic types, the most famous is the centuries-old *Bruine Kroeg* (brown cafe). These are brown because of tobacco stains (a red flag for rabid nonsmokers) and because the proprietors make a cult of never washing or painting the spectacularly fly-blown walls. How to recognize them? They are the quintessence of coziness *(gezelligheid)* and seem trapped in a time warp—anywhere from about 1600 (the Golden Age) to 1968 (Provos, hippies). They are amazingly interchangeable, whether authentically old or made to look that way—neobrowns. Standard trappings include: picturesque locals who feign surprise at the sight of a nonregular; a worn wooden or zinc bar; (empty) barrels of *jenever* or beer; a snooker table; sand—not sawdust—on the floor; a sidewalk terrace; and carpets on the worn wooden tables. The carpets absorb spilled beer, are optional, and seem to be going out of fashion (but not at places where the traditional style is more than a skin-deep affectation). Brown cafes often open in the morning (between 8 and 10am) and close late at night (between 1 and 3am). They're found all over town, with a high concentration between Spui and Centraal Station, and in the Jordaan. The standard lunch and snack menu features a selection of small bun sandwiches *(broodjes)* made with everything from *osseworst* (smoked beef sausage) to cheese, pastrami, vegetables, ham, and

salami; *toost* (toasted white bread) with ham and cheese, smoked eel, or beef tartare; and a variety of simple salads. Occasionally omelets, croquettes, or quiches crop up.

The opposite of the brown cafes are the "white" or "grand" cafes: modern, spacious establishments that usually have big windows and terraces and more food on the menu (salad bar, quiches, sandwiches, daily specials, pasta, and so forth). They can be refreshingly anonymous and sunny after all those chummy, cheek-by-jowl brown-cafe conversations, though they're often just as smoky.

Falling between the extremes are the dozen or so "designer" cafes, frequented primarily by a self-consciously sophisticated crowd. They combine elements of the old (coziness, smoke patina, sand on the floor, regulars) and new (spaciousness, better food, a degree of anonymity). They're all in the center of town, and opening hours are generally 10am to 1 or 2am. Dozens of other cafes, tea salons, and diners don't fit into these categories; some resemble old-fashioned American bakeries or collegiate coffee shops. (The viral Planet Hollywood and the homegrown theme park, Three Sisters, a hodgepodge of mock-Americana and pseudo-Brit, continue to thrive.)

Tap Houses

It's no coincidence that tap water in Amsterdam is called "municipal beer" *(gemeente pils)*—which perhaps explains the success of those local brews Heineken and Amstel. Tap houses, *proeflokaalen,* are where *jenever* and beer are swilled from noon until about 8pm, usually by middle-aged and older tipplers. Food is rarely available. The best ones are within stumbling distance of the Dam. (See p. 19 for more on Dutch gin and how to drink it.)

How to Dress

The Dutch are casual, but not frumpy. As long as you don't have hygiene problems, you can wear just about anything to just about any restaurant. At trendy places people wear casual-chic clothing, but no one will bat an eye if you wear a tie to a diner, or show up in jeans at a schmancy restaurant (exceptions: Vermeer, La Rive, and ultrastarchy L'Excelsior).

When to Eat

Amsterdammers like to eat a hearty breakfast (cheese, ham, bread, and more) and a light lunch (a salad or sandwich) at a cafe, and they prefer to dine early (from 5:30pm on). Local

restaurateurs, used to tourists, joke about "national time slots"; the Dutch come first, followed by Americans and Germans (6:30pm), Scandinavians (7pm), French and Italians (8:30pm), and Spanish (9pm). Normal restaurant hours are 5:30 to 10pm; *eethuis* (simple restaurants and diners) serve from about 4 to 10pm; cafe hours vary widely, many open from 10am to 1am (see "Cafes" later in this chapter).

Getting the Right Table

The trick to snagging a good table is to time your reservation—reserve whenever possible—to suit the kind of restaurant. Go later (8pm on) to an authentic Dutch restaurant; early (7:30pm or so) to a trendy or ethnic spot that fills up late. Once you've got your table, you can stay as long as you like; most restaurants make no attempt to "turn tables." Service is often relaxed, i.e., slow. The Dutch are proud people and are funny about tips (they hate to feel they're being coerced). Slipping the maitre d' a wad might get you a window table at a finer (or ethnic) establishment, but it won't go down well elsewhere.

Celebrity Chefs

Chef-watchers have been stunned in recent years by a series of toque transfers worthy of a quick-change artist: **Robert Kranenborg** left La Rive for his posh new place, Vossius, while his second-in-command became top dog at Vermeer; with watch synchronized, Vermeer's chef moved to La Rive to replace Kranenborg. At the same time, another Michelin-pedigree star chef, **Gertjan Hageman,** came out of mothballs to open the hot spot De Kas in a reconverted hothouse. Meanwhile, at Blakes designer restaurant (in a reconverted 18th-century bakery), **Schilo van Coevorden** continues to number among Amsterdam's hottest culinary properties, a proficient practitioner of a number of ethnic cuisines (Thai, Italian, French). Bordewijk, serving French/Italian–inspired seasonal dishes, is the creation of two restaurateur/chefs, **Wil Demandt** and **Hans Mosterd,** but the restaurant's fame derives from the place itself—a chilling, echoing, postmodern designer number, on a trendy Jordaan square. Back to La Rive, at the mega-luxury Amstel Inter-Continental Hotel. It's now under the baton of Michelin-starred chef **Edwin Kats,** who won praise for his classics at another luxury hotel-restaurant, Vermeer, at the NH Barbizon Palace. Under its new chef **Pascal Jalhaij,** Vermeer remains strait-laced but attracts serious foodies (Jalhaij was sous-chef at La Rive under Kranenborg). Frenchman

Christophe Royer is Christophe, chic Grachtengordel's perennial haven for reverent epicures. Christophe was among the first chefs in Holland to be awarded a Michelin star, and he isn't likely to let it fall from gourmet heaven. Dutch/French/Thai chef **Jos Boomgaardt** reinvented himself several years ago as the high priest of fusion (at Tom Yam Fusion Cuisine), but is now fighting a rear-guard battle for continued notoriety.

The Lowdown

Restaurants

Going Dutch... If you eat only one Dutch meal in Amsterdam, make the award-winning **De Roode Leeuw** the place. It's a fixture on the Neerlands Dis (Dutch Regional Cuisine) circuit. The old-fashioned interior is what you want in a famously stuffy place like this: carved wood, red armchairs, starched white tablecloths, professional service. The raw new herring and shrimp and beef croquettes are about as good as you can get; in spring, the white Limburg asparagus and farmhouse ham are out of this world. Otherwise, unfindable delicacies like dried *nagelhout* beef are a house specialty. There is even surprisingly quaffable Dutch Riesling from the tiny producers around Maastricht in the south on the wine list.

To see office workers, provincials, and package tourists at their happy-hour best, hit magnificently kitschy but cozy **Haesje Claes** near Spui. Mustachioed proprietor André Duyves is a miracle worker: His jovial tourist trap actually serves decent grub (classic mashed potatoes with a pool of gravy, sauerkraut, and pork ribs, plus game in winter). But you haven't seen anything until you've buzzed over to **D'Vijff Vlieghen,** better known as the Five Flies, an Old Dutch theme park of a place founded by flamboyant antiques dealer Nicolaas Kroese. Back in the 1950s, he raced out to the airport in a limo every time a celeb came to town, then immortalized their visits with brass plaques on his bentwood chairs. Stuffed with authentic antiques and delft tiles, the labyrinth of dark, cozy rooms spreads through five ramshackle 16th-century buildings near Spui. Through the candlelit gloom, the tourists and conventioneers probably can't see the farmhouse ham with fresh apple salad on their plates. A pity; it's not bad.

The **Pancake Bakery** is the place to go if you and the kids really must experience the infamous Dutch pancake. You'll soon forget you're in the basement of a converted Prinsengracht warehouse—there are American ice cream parlor–style marble tabletops on old sewing-machine legs, laminated menus, and an old Dutch stove chugging away. Among the 70 kinds of pancakes, stick to the sweet ones. No matter what your constitution, the surreal fantasies topped with turkey in curry sauce, pineapple, apricot, and raisins will stick to you. **Piet de Leeuw Steakhouse** is the kind of joint you feel right at home in. There's a cigarette machine on one wall, and the dark interior was probably last decorated circa 1955. The famous cholesterol-rich killer beefsteaks, pan-fried in margarine with onions, come with a slice of white bread. Central-casting waiters suss you out before bringing you toothpicks with tiny American flags to spear your raw herring, sweet pickles, and triangles of toast.

Dutch on the run... When you've had enough of the potentially lethal french fry stands all over town, and the '50s-style, out-of-the-wall **Febo** automats (Holland's equivalent of McDonald's) selling croquettes, hamburgers, and other dubious-looking quickies on greasy trays, it's time to go fish: Amsterdammers take their herring very seriously. As British ambassador George Downing reported in 1661, the city's Golden Age riches depended on the fact that people were better nourished—on herring—than the rest of Europe. New, young, virginal herring, called *nieuwe haring,* comes on the market late May or early June and is best only for a few weeks, though it's sold well into the summer. There are dozens of *herringhuis* fish stands in the center of town. The best of all is **Van Altena,** a class operation across from the Rijksmuseum. Owner Pieter van Altena has spent a lot of time and money perfecting the raw herring preservation process; connoisseurs travel miles to stock up on his fresh and pickled herring and lunch on delicious salmon or crab salad. No plastic here: You use proper stainless-steel flatware and drink chilled white wine in a stemmed glass. **Van Dobben** has been the spot for the last 55 years to try that famous Amsterdam specialty, the croquette (though these curious lumps are no longer made in-house). Once you've burned your tongue on one and decided croquettes are a quaint curiosity, order a glass of milk at the vintage counter and try an eel or pastrami sandwich instead.

Real *rijsttafel*... Literally, a "rice table"—an Indonesian meal composed of anything from a dozen or more different small dishes. At **Tempo Doeloe,** owner Nagy Ghebrial explains to interested first-time guests how to progress through each course, moving methodically from mild (*risolles*—crepes with beef), to spicy (*soto ajam*—chicken soup), to hot (*ajam roedjak*—chicken with chile and coconut milk), to very hot (*ikan pepesan*—poached mackerel with chile sauce). Take Nagy's advice: Even chile devotees will weep, sweat, and possibly swoon when eating the infernal "very hot" selections. The skillfully contrasting dishes, professional but laid-back service, and pleasant theatrical decor make this the best Indonesian in town. Right next door, Nagy's former business partner Thomas Hart has opened a simpler place with takeout food: **Tujuh Maret.** The food is excellent. Further competition comes from classy **Long Pura,** in the Jordaan. You are handed an orchid blossom and seated under upside-down parasols hung from the ceiling. The *daging mbe* (dried, stewed beef with onions and spices) is divine. **Sahid Jaya** is a luxury restaurant with good food, though the spice has been toned down to please Dutch taste buds. The business and tourist clientele seem most interested in the polished service, the posh decor (apricot drapes, cream tablecloths, and Indonesian shadow puppets), and the alfresco dining in a beautiful Golden Bend backyard. **Sama Sebo** is still among the city's best-known Indonesian restaurants, possibly because it's near the Rijksmuseum and the fashion boutiques of P.C. Hooftstraat. The decor is unobtrusive—traditional dyed fabrics, reed mats—but the tables are small and pushed too close together. The food is no longer the best in town, though the Indonesian signature dish, *rendang padang* (beef with chile and coconut sauce), is excellent. For quick, cheap, and tasty dishes served until the early hours, head for **Bojo,** near Leidseplein.

Mumbai on the Amstel... Amsterdam can't compete with London when it comes to Indian food, but **Memories of India,** a lavish maharajah's palace of a place near Rembrandtplein, is in the running (maybe because it's run by the owners of two distinguished Indian restaurants in London). The kind of place where you'd expect to see an Indian movie star posing under the faux palm trees, it borders on glitzy exotica. The lamb vindaloo is authentically spicy,

though, the chapatis and nans fresh and flavorful, and the service polished. **Shiva,** just a few doors down, has been around longer—it's equally upscale, with starched white tablecloths and uniformed waiters, but it's smaller, considerably less showy, and the food is equally excellent. The curries range from mild to scorching, and there is moist tandoori or tikka chicken and nicely spiced madras lamb.

Thai me up... Trendy **Rakang Thai** is the most unusual Thai place in town: originally a tiny designer furniture boutique in the Jordaan, whose owners, seeing that business was slow, mummified the chairs in white canvas, rearranged the furnishings, and hired chef Nathapong Mungkorn in 1995. Seven years later the place is still a hit with trendy media types, artists, models, and foodies. Luckily, the chef is no slouch, and the food, though preciously presented and overpriced, is as spicy and authentic as you'd like it to be.

Asian delights... **Yoichi,** near Frederiksplein, offers plenty of sake, sukiyaki, teriyaki steaks, and other classic Japanese meat dishes on the menu, plus good fish, sushi, and veggies, of course, with bonsai trees and Buddhist calm all around. This was the first Japanese restaurant in town; now there are more luxurious ones in and around the Okura Hotel, way out on the edge of the Old South, but local Japanese still flock to Yoichi. Most non-Japanese are directed to the dreary converted Dutch cafe downstairs—make sure there are no holes in your socks, and reserve a table in the upstairs tatami room instead. New and totally different, **Wagamama** is a new-age noodle restaurant that's so Zen—no smoking, no reservations—you can't help wondering where they're hiding the joy. The ramen and udon noodles are great, though, and the price is right. **Bananarama** is a trendy Philippino restaurant in the Jordaan, with mock-Gauguin murals and a chic-bistro atmosphere. With an eye to the success of the Indonesian *rijsttafel* formula, it specializes in a festive parade of small portions of Filipino delicacies, including *lumpia* (egg rolls), *adobong manok* (chicken with coconut, laurel, and black peppercorns), and mango mousse for dessert. Local Surinamese swear by **Warung Marlon,** an outwardly unappealing cafe/takeout joint in the far-flung De Pijp neighborhood: great roasted meat and Surinamese Asian melting-pot specialties (everything from banana chips to

wonton soup, from *sate* chicken in spicy peanut sauce to Peking duck). It's also cheap, fast, and totally nonsmoking.

Utopian Ethiopian... **Kilimanjaro,** a small, chic East African restaurant not far from the Maritime Museum in eastern central Amsterdam, remains popular after 8 years of favorable reviews. This outpost of exotica serves such authentically good food that, with seating for only 25 or so on the ground floor of a narrow old house, you may not be able to get a table. Persist. The Dutchman who runs the place fell in love with Africa and works with an Ethiopian cook to reproduce a variety of specialties like Senegalese lamb curry, crocodile steak (very snappy), and *doro wat,* spicy Ethiopian chicken sautéed in pepper sauce and served with a spinach salad. And the simple decor—high ceilings, white walls, and colorful tablecloths designed in Africa but made in Holland—smartly manages to avoid the usual colonial jungle-cabana look.

Multi Mediterranean... There are dozens of Italian restaurants in town, most of them more Dutch than Italian, with the usual straw-wrapped flasks and vaguely Neapolitan/Tuscan dishes and pizzas. Open the Yellow Pages and take your pick. Others feature pasta and live opera singing, or people-watching over indifferent food. Pricey **Caruso,** in the Italian-owned Jolly Hotel Carlton overlooking Muntplein, looks like a bordello, with red-velvet armchairs and carpets, huge Venetian chandeliers, and gilt plasterwork. It makes no pretense of offering anything but updated *nuova cucina*—the kind of nouvelle food you'd get in a swank hotel restaurant in Milan or Rome. The chef, brought in from Italy specifically to make this the best ristorante in town, hasn't succeeded yet, though he does excel with fish.

Out beyond the Albert Cuypstraat market, in the multiethnic part of central Amsterdam, is one of the city's authentic neighborhood Italian eateries, the kind of place you'd find down a back street in Bari. It's called **L'Angoletto** because it sits on a corner *(un angolo),* which in terms of decor is its only distinctive feature (other than the fact that you can sit in front of the pizza oven downstairs or on a cramped mezzanine). It's run by young Italians from Taranto, in southern Italy, who serve crisp classic pizzas (*napoletana* and *margherita*), simple but tasty

pasta (spaghetti with tomato sauce and hot pepperoncini), and meat such as Tuscan steaks. Meanwhile, on the Spanish front, the tapas craze—which hit Amsterdam 5 years later than the rest of Europe—is still going strong. So if you thought you could avoid the music, the posturing youngsters, and the endless procession of bite-sized goodies, think again. **Duende** is the quintessential Jordaan tapas bar, where self-conscious 20-somethings lounge around the cool tile-floored interior, or, in summer, hang out on the terrace. Try the tasty *calamares* (squid rings), *bacalao* (salt cod), and chorizo. **Tapas Bar Català,** near Spui, probably has better food, and will appeal to middle-aged folks looking for empanadas, mushrooms, prawns, and salads of all kinds. **Traiterie Grekas** is a Greek catering and takeout restaurant. Though its few tables are sandwiched between a cold case and the kitchen, it is modern, spotless, plays classical music, and serves perhaps the city's best stuffed bell peppers, *spanakopita* (spinach pie), and stuffed grape leaves, plus daily specials, all at reasonable prices.

The French connection... When in Amsterdam, take the appellation "French" with a truckload of *sel* (salt). Most places serve Dutch variations on French themes, and some of the best restaurants commonly considered French actually serve something more akin to California cuisine than anything you'd find in Paris. The jury is out on **Vossius,** star chef Robert Kranenborg's posh-minimalist temple of gastronomy overlooking Vondelpark. Kranenborg had two Michelin stars at La Rive but many wondered then if his food would have won such distinctions in other surroundings. Another Michelin-star pedigree chef, Gertjan Hageman, has made a comeback with his French restaurant **De Kas,** in a reconverted hothouse in eastern Amsterdam. Hageman grows most of his own (organic) produce and the offering changes daily. There's no menu, but the soups, breads, and simple roasted fish are excellent, so much so that the place gets booked up weeks or months ahead. At perennial **Bordewijk,** facing Noorderkerk in the Jordaan, the gray-and-black postmodern decor is chilling, the crowd chic. Always inspired, the seasonal menu is at the forefront of the creative pack, with nods to France, northern Italy, and Spain. **Christophe** is chef Christophe Royer's authentically French yet creative luxury restaurant in the moneyed Grachtengordel neighborhood. It has a comfortable,

grayscale postmodern interior, less angular and stark than Bordewijk's. Here, too, the menu changes regularly, offering variations on the theme of southwestern French and Provençal dishes (langoustine *tagine* with broadbeans; turbot with spices and puréed artichokes).

L'Excelsior, at the Hotel de L'Europe on the Amstel River, is the kind of starchy luxury-hotel restaurant that you might as easily find in London, New York, or Paris. There are faux Louis-something armchairs, thick carpets, and a brigade of uniformed waiters, busboys, and sommeliers to bring you the competently prepared Dover sole with chanterelles, roast lamb with thyme, and mouthwatering desserts. Meanwhile, at the Amstel Inter-Continental Hotel, **La Rive,** a classic French operation from the name on up, continues to wow locals. There seem to be as many waiters and busboys as diners. Thick carpets tempt you to go barefoot, the baroque flower arrangements are straight out of the Golden Age, and starched cloth drapes elegantly on spacious window-side tables overlooking the Amstel River. Chef Edwin Kats's cuisine has a distinctly Provençal-Med flavor (monkfish with sun-dried tomato wrapped in Jabugo ham, with eggplant purée and creamy caper sauce). **Vermeer** is another corporate foodie hot spot, Kats's former fief, now in the hands of Pascal Jalhaj. His pigeon smoked on the bone with roasted pineapple and white-peach and bay leaf *jus* with salsify is ambitious (perhaps too ambitious), but there is a Calvinistic, quintessentially un-fun feel to the place. Housed in two restored buildings, it belongs to the luxury/business NH Barbizon Palace Hotel. The decor features mock–Louis XIII armchairs, delft-blue plates, silver platters, and crystal. **De Silveren Spiegel** is another French/Dutch luxury restaurant, a survivor despite umpteen bad reviews, in two old houses near the Singel, and has yet another interior plucked from a Golden Age canvas: antique black-and-white tile floors, a carved spiral staircase, silver candlesticks, and crisp white tablecloths. The service can be equally stiff, and the cooking probably isn't worth the 43€ ($50)-a-head bill.

For that special moment... No question, the place to pop corks, people-watch, and applaud when the food arrives is still **Le Garage.** Flamboyant restaurateur Joop Braakhekke is a TV celeb, and at his wildly successful restaurant the smell of garlic hits the socialites and jet-setters smack in

the face as they enter. The menu shuttles between a Parisian brasserie and a Tuscan trattoria, with stopovers in Tokyo and Mumbai. The decor would be a hit in Vegas—mirrors, red vinyl banquettes, and black, wraparound wooden chairs. You'll be thankful for the basket of garlic bread because the atmosphere is so festive it can take an hour to get food on the table. At Gertjan Hageman's **De Kas,** you sit in an immense reconverted hothouse with 40-foot ceilings, but the festive mood at dinner (lunch is quiet) fills the space, spilling into the chef's organic plantings and out into the surrounding park. If you dress up in black to celebrate, and I don't mean a tux, then head for ultrahip and hyper-pricey **Blakes,** in the hotel of the same name, where the disarmingly affable chef Schilo van Coevorden is cooking up Thai/Italian/French–inspired delicacies (foie gras soup with sweet Thai basil and lime; chicken with gingko-nut curry) in a reconverted landmark bakery decorated by Anouska Hempel (aka Lady Weinberg, if you please).

Forget about the food at the **Café Américain,** and you'll have a grand time drinking, people-watching, and gazing at the gorgeous Art Nouveau–cum–Art Deco landmark interior. The chandeliers are right out of the *War of the Worlds* set design; ceiling fans create a pleasant haze of smoke that accents the Gatsbyesque atmosphere. This is where locals come for Sunday brunch, before or after the theater, or to celebrate everything from weddings and golden anniversaries to divorces. The French brasserie–style dishes—like smoked rabbit salad with walnut-raspberry dressing or duck breast with caramelized mango sauce and red peppercorns—are perfectly edible, if overly ambitious. **Long Pura** is the place to go for a swanky Indonesian feast amid neocolonial decor, served by costumed waiters. Happily, the food is spicy, authentic, and delicious. **Lucius,** the city's liveliest fish restaurant, is always packed (with locals and tourists), noisy, and fun, and longtime owners George and Marleen Lodewijks do all they can to keep the Parisian brasserie atmosphere frenzied. It's a miracle the fish stay so fresh; it's as if they'd just leapt out of the huge aquarium in the dining room (except that those are tropical fish, in case you're wondering).

Overrated… **De Silveren Spiegel,** a luxurious French/Dutch restaurant near Singel in a gorgeous Old Dutch setting—centuries-old step-gable facade, creaking spiral staircase,

antique tables—serves okay food, and the service can be starchy indeed. The clientele is distinctly business- and tourist-oriented, and the staff may think that, what with the antique black-and-white tile floors and the polished silver candlesticks, no extra effort is required. A lot of people used to refer to Tom Yam as the best Thai restaurant in town, confusing luxury with authenticity. Now that it's been reinvented as **Tom Yam Fusion Cuisine,** guess what? The more things change, the more they stay the same. The service is still excellent, the food very good indeed, but let's be honest: Chef Jos Boomgaardt tailors his fusion delicacies to please tame Dutch palates. **Sama Sebo,** near the Rijksmuseum, used to serve some of the best Indonesian food in town, but fatigue has apparently gained the upper hand. The food is okay but nothing more, though visitors continue to flock here, paying premium prices. **Le Pêcheur** has fine-quality fish and the setting is swell—a pleasant dining room or lovely outdoor terrace—but the prices are high, the pretentiousness factor on the rise, and the fussy herb sauces just possibly unnecessary.

See-and-be-scenes... Suits, fashion models, and the gastrochic foodie crowd all fight for a place in the toney blue-minimalist formal dining room of chef Robert Kranenborg's **Vossius,** overlooking Vondelpark (the smaller, less formal bistro area is uncrowded). Another Amsterdam veteran with a Michelin-star pedigree, Gertjan Hageman, draws the same self-consciously sophisticated crowd to his organic, market-menu hot spot, **De Kas,** in a former hothouse reconverted to the tune of $1.5 million. At **Le Garage** you still have to beg to get a reservation. The service is a circus act, and you can wait hours to get fed, but the fusion fare is worth it (cubed tuna tartare with curry and a crisp spinach pancake, and flaming-hot Thai chicken with green chile sauce). **Blakes,** in the new ultrachic designer hotel of the same name, is where neomillionaires, jet-setters, and media tycoons go to check out each other's black duds while feeding on skate filet with squid ink sauce or chicken Fabergé with lobster and ginger.

Amsterdam, on the western edge of town in a former water-pumping plant, is where young trendies mix with the middle-aged TV and media crowd from the broadcasting studios next door. The menu is eclectic, the food edible

(smoked halibut with horseradish; minty lamb stew). **La Rive** is still *the* place to show off your diamonds, Savile Row suit, or designer leather pants. You never know—one of the Amstel Inter-Continental Hotel's dozens of celebrity regulars might stroll in, and chef Edwin Kats is no slouch: He had a star at Vermeer before taking over from Robert Kranenborg. Across town in the Jordaan, land of converted warehouses, you'll find the hip loft set displayed like rough diamonds on **Bordewijk's** black-and-red tables. You may wonder whether your 30-ish neighbor has come to eat the superb, French/Italian–inspired cuisine or just to see what the competition is up to. Move over a few streets in the Jordaan and shave off a decade from the average age of the clients and you'll find **Rakang Thai,** an exotic design restaurant featured regularly in trendy magazines. This is still *the* place to show off your crazy clubwear and establish your credentials as an eater of hot ethnic food.

Landmarks... Once upon a time, **L'Excelsior,** in the 1896 Hotel de L'Europe, was the top French restaurant in town. The Michelin stars may have departed, but this is still a luxury establishment, its dining room overlooking the Amstel River at Muntplein. Some of the waiters seem like they've been around since the place was built, and the food, though traditional, is rather good. The early 1900s **Café Américain** at Leidseplein is a place architecture students seek out for the landmark Jungendstil (Art Nouveau) decor, with Art Deco additions. Hanging from the high, vaulted ceiling are huge bronze and stained-glass lamps that look like they might take wing. The wall clock with gold letters and symbolist murals recalls the opulence of West Egg. It's a delight to have a drink or an undemanding French-Dutch meal here and people-watch. **Amsterdam,** a trendy restaurant favored by TV types and wannabes, is in a magnificent 19th-century water-pumping plant, with 100-foot ceilings. Ornamental iron and brickwork, huge pumps, and engines surround the hundreds of wooden tables. **De Roode Leeuw,** in a peculiar turn-of-the-century building, has the city's oldest enclosed (and heated) sidewalk terrace. The old-fashioned paneled dining room is decorated with wonderfully hideous carved wooden wagons hanging from the ceiling on otherworldly sleds. Despite having two strikes against it—it's on neon-lit Damrak and it's Dutch—the place hits a home run for the homey atmosphere and food.

Cheap eats... **Van Dobben** is great for sandwiches and croquettes. Several good bets are near the Albert Cuypstraat market. In the De Pijp neighborhood, **Warung Marlon** is a favorite for cheap, fast, and lip-smacking Surinamese (rice topped with chicken in peanut sauce, wonton soup, Peking duck, and banana chips), and it's totally nonsmoking. One of the cheapest Indonesian restaurants in town is **Bojo,** near Leidseplein. All the usual favorites are served until 4am on Friday and Saturday nights. **Traiterie Grekas,** on Singel near Spui, is more a caterer's shop than a restaurant, but the Greek food—grape leaves, moussaka, and eggplant and chickpea dips—is tops. Nearby **Haesje Claes** has a cheap tourist menu with all the rib-sticking Dutch goodies, including *stamppot.* The **Pancake Bakery,** in the basement of a Prinsengracht warehouse, offers 70 kinds of meal-in-one pancakes, each guaranteed to fill you to bursting for a relative pittance.

Isn't it romantic?... In Amsterdam, you'll pay for romance and atmosphere. **Le Pêcheur** is at its best when the lights are low and the elegant decor—white tablecloths, nautical prints—becomes a mere backdrop. Better still is a table in the flower-filled backyard, tucked between the 17th-century mansions of the Golden Bend; there is no more gorgeous a place to feast on fish—some of the city's best. Try the saffron and fennel soup with sautéed Dutch shrimp, or the thyme-perfumed brill fillet with tagliatelle. When you feel like singing a love duet, **Caruso** may be just the place for you—along with the tasty, updated Italian food, you get a setting worthy of La Scala and a deliciously obsequious staff who will whisper to you in Italian if you like (it's remarkably more romantic-sounding than Dutch).

Tempo Doeloe may have the best Indonesian food in town, but it's also romantic in a spunky, exotic way. The theatrical lighting makes everyone seem to have bedroom eyes. **Long Pura,** the other top Indonesian, has a spiffy neocolonial decor and soft lighting: An orchid blossom greets you at the table, but the rest is up to you. **Moko,** under the spreading trees of Amstelveld Square, must be the prettiest restaurant in town for besotted intellectual couples wearing existentialist black. The warm-weather terrace is best, but even the discreet designer interior, in the basement of an old church (the Amstelkerk), has big windows, aquariums, and uncomfy designer furniture to

encourage intellectual intercourse. The kitchen does a fairly competent job with the eclectic menu, offering Asian-Med fusion food. **Wilhelmina-Dok** can't help being romantic, even though on the outside it's a strange-looking place (it's fine on the inside), all by itself beside the water. This cafe-restaurant is on three floors (though the chandeliered top-floor Kapiteinskamer/Captain's Cabin is for groups only). Plain wood tables, wood floors, and oak cabinets give the interior an old-fashioned maritime look, and large windows serve up views across the narrow, barge-speckled channel to the cruise-ship Passenger Terminal Amsterdam on the south shore. Candlelight softens the marine decor. The menu favors plain cooking and organic products, and the Continental food—grilled swordfish with saffron rice, grilled veal cutlets with marinated eggplants, flageolet salad, and pesto—ebbs and flows like the tides in the IJ channel, largely unremarked, as trendy youth stare into each other's mauve makeup, caress each other's designer club-wear labels, and wonder if romance will bloom later on the dance floor of More, Sinners in Heaven, or iT (see the Nightlife chapter).

Tourist traps... **D'Vijff Vlieghen,** better known to English speakers as the **Five Flies,** is the mother of all themed tourist traps and a must for anyone interested in the genre. It was founded after World War II by flamboyant antiques dealer Nicolaas Kroese, whose motto ran, "You haven't been to Amsterdam if you haven't been to the Five Flies." The instant-ancient decor alone is worth a detour. And the French/Dutch fare isn't that bad (lots of updated ham and apple dishes, plus game and fish). **Haesje Claes** has become the Five Flies' direct competitor. Owner André Duyves, too, has an instant-old pedigree: The restaurant has been around since 1970, but he touts the date 1520 prominently because that's when Lady Haesje Claes was born nearby. ("The spirit and period atmosphere linger," Duyves likes to say through his impressive moustache.) The place is marvelously kitsch, with mock everything, except the authentically old buildings (totally rebuilt, of course). Luckily, it's all good fun, and the traditional Dutch food is good enough, as long as you stick to things like *stamppot* or salad with herring and smoked eel. The **Pancake Bakery** is something altogether different, designed especially for Americans, it seems, and for kids

who've just gotta have a *pannekoek.* Don't bother to ask your fellow diners what's what—they're not Dutch.

Something fishy... For reasons beyond the ken of a non-Dutch person, all Amsterdam's best fish restaurants are landlocked and about as far from the rivers or canals as possible in this floating city. The Atlantic and North Sea fish at **Albatros Seafoodhouse** have the great virtue of being grilled, poached, and fried in the simplest manner possible, then served in ship-ahoy decor by friendly old-timers in a relaxed Jordaan neighborhood atmosphere (there's even a nonsmoking section). Try the mixed seafood salad, the raw herring, and the sea bass (they make a mean tiramisu, too). No quaint fishermen's nets adorn **Le Pêcheur,** a stylish restaurant on Reguliersdwarsstraat. The canal isn't in view, but you can admire the backsides and gardens of 17th-century mansions as you dine on elaborate fish dishes, skillfully prepared. You'll marvel—or gasp—at the chef's use of herbs and sauces (sea bass with tarragon-mustard sauce; prawns with a garlicky fennel sauce). At lively and fun **Lucius,** the herring, plaice, sole, and bream are equally tasty raw, grilled, poached, or baked. The seafood's so fresh you almost wish you'd ordered it without that delicious, flavorful, but superfluous cayenne or green-pepper sauce.

Can you put that out, please?... Amsterdam is a non-smoker's hell—the opposite of California—so eat outside or pick an uncrowded time and ask the waiter or host to make an effort to seat nonsmokers near you. Call ahead and explain your request in detail—then prepare to be smoked like a local eel. The only totally smoke-free eateries I've found in town are cheap, cheery, and delicious Surinamese **Warung Marlon** and the hip Japanese noodle bar **Wagamama. De Vrolijke Abrikoos,** a vegetarian restaurant, reserves half of its one big room for nonpuffers (weekdays only). The first thing you notice when you enter the vegetarian **Golden Temple** is that you can actually *see* the place—the veil of cigarette smoke that obscures most Amsterdam restaurants has been lifted here by a restaurant-wide no-smoking policy that adds a heavenly touch all by itself. **In de Wildeman**—a beer joint—has an entire room for nonsmokers. **Café Américain** has a small section in the bar/cafe area (not in the brasserie). **Albatros**

Seafoodhouse, a friendly eatery, has a big, bona fide nonsmoking area and a staff that'll defend your air space. The managers of **Haesje Claes** (Dutch classics) and **Memories of India** are sympathetic to the antitobacco crowd, but there's only so much they can do to convince other patrons to stump out those cigs and—ever popular—cigars. Tolerance! And good—cough—luck.

When the play's the thing... The Dutch eat dinner very early indeed, and most restaurants stop serving by 11pm, so post-theater meals in restaurants are hard to manage: It's as if Calvin wouldn't approve if you enjoyed two forms of entertainment on a single night. **Café Américain** specializes in feeding the concert and theater crowds of the Stadsschouwburg across the street in Leidseplein and the Lido casino and cabaret around the corner on Singelgracht; it serves dinner until midnight, and light meals and snacks until 1am. So what if the stunning Art Nouveau interior and ambience are more interesting than the French-inspired food? **Le Pêcheur,** a swanky fish restaurant on Reguliersdwarsstraat near Rembrandtplein, is within striking distance of all the city's venues, especially the Muziektheater and Carré, nearby on the Amstel River. The well-heeled international clientele is used to late dining; and if you come in too late for the main menu, after around 11pm, there's a variety of classy snacks served until 1am—caviar, cold lobster, oysters, smoked salmon, and more. One of the wildest, hottest restaurants in town, **Le Garage** is not a late-night place per se, but the kitchen will serve until about midnight, and the tables are still crowded well after the witching hour. At **Amsterdam,** another hip eatery, the kitchen stays open until 11:30pm, and you can get snacks and light meals until 1am (till 2am on Fri and Sat). On weekends, you can get a pan-fried steak or a plate of herring until midnight at homey **Piet de Leeuw Steakhouse. Bojo,** a cheap and cheery Indonesian eatery near Leidseplein, serves until 1am (4am Fri and Sat nights). Other after-11 eats are found at: **Lucius** (fish), **Memories of India, Tapas Bar Català, Tempo Doeloe, Van Dobben,** and **D'Vijff Vlieghen.** Beyond these, your best bet for a late-night hangout is a cafe (see "Cafes," later in this chapter).

Kid pleasers... The Dutch are very tolerant of rambunctious youngsters. You can take them almost anywhere (at least

anywhere not strictly for elitist trendies), as long as you can afford to pay for them. One spot they're sure to love is **Haesje Claes,** a roistering Dutch place with Old Dutch decor. Host André Duyves seems right out of Walt Disney, and his food will remind the kiddies of school lunches—the house specialty, *stamppot,* is none other than mashed potatoes with a ladle of dark gravy, sausages, ribs, sauerkraut, and more. Kids love the croquettes and milk at **Van Dobben.** At the **Pancake Bakery,** you might be back home at a demented IHOP. The kids can splash and spill corn and sugar syrup (no maple syrup in view) without danger, since the tabletops are marble and the menus laminated. They're sure to find something they like among the omelets and 70 kinds of pancakes topped with everything from fried chicken to sweet corn. Since few kids can resist a good pizza, you might also try the straightforward trattoria **L'Angoletto.** Surprisingly, hip **Amsterdam** is very brat-friendly; the eclectic food and industrial decor (an old water-pumping plant) appeal to budding trendies.

For a quiet tête-à-tête... **Vermeer,** the NH Barbizon Palace's luxury Dutch/French restaurant, is synonymous with discretion. There's enough room between the tables for rafts of waiters and busboys to glide by, the thick carpets absorb unpleasant sounds, and the mock–Louis XIII armchairs are as upright as the diners in them. Classically French **La Rive** and **L'Excelsior** have some of the highest prices in town, which keeps the number of diners to a minimum. An added plus at La Rive is the pianist, who produces soothing background music. **De Roode Leeuw,** a serious Dutch restaurant, has the kind of old-fashioned paneled decor, big tables, and professional waiters that perfectly complement intimate conversations.

Vegging out... The antimeat crowd is well served in Amsterdam, since most menus feature salads and fish. There really is no need to seek out the dozens of joyless, mediocre vegetarian-only eateries where the owners and clients are likely to snarl at anyone wearing leather shoes. However, if that's your bag, and you can stomach the name, try **De Vrolijke Abrikoos,** considered by those in the know the very best veggie eatery in Amsterdam—good for succulent tofu and satisfying salads. Everything is biodynamically grown and respectfully consumed. There's a big

nonsmoking section (weekdays), and the walls are a comforting shade of edible apricot. If anything, the limpid atmosphere in the **Golden Temple** is a tad too hallowed, an effect enhanced by a Zen-like absence of decorative flourishes. The menu livens things up, though, with an unlikely roster of Indian, Middle Eastern, and Mexican dishes. This could make for an interesting game of mix-and-match if only the small print didn't all but instruct you to keep them apart. The food is delicately spiced and flavored, and evidently prepared by loving hands. Multiple-choice platters are a good way to go. For the Indian *thali,* you select from constituents like *sag paneer* (spinach and homemade cheese), vegetable *korma,* and *raita* (cucumber and yogurt dip); the Middle Eastern platter has stalwarts like falafel, chickpea-and-vegetable stew, and vegetable *dolmas.* Side dishes range across items as varied as guacamole, couscous, and *pakora.*

Described by its owners as a "nondestinational food station," **Wagamama,** a Zen-style Japanese noodle restaurant, has dozens of great veg combos (it's nonsmoking and the food is GMO—and humor—free). Most other Asian restaurants, and all the Indonesian places in town, offer a variety of vegetable-only dishes and vegetarian fixed-price menus. **Tempo Doeloe** has two vegetarian menus (plus up to five courses a la carte) that are out of this world, featuring a variety of veggies and bean sprouts with mild or spicy peanut sauce (*gado-gado* and *sajoer lodeh*) and sweet and sour *petjel* sauce, plus saffron-perfumed rice, vegetable pancakes, and fruit desserts.

When the boss is paying... **De Silveren Spiegel,** which sits across the street from the Amsterdam Renaissance Hotel in two handsome old buildings, is the kind of place food-challenged businesspeople and upscale conventioneers head to when they don't have to spend their own money. The fancy French/Dutch food fits the candlelit, antiques-crammed setting. At **Vermeer,** another architectural gem in two landmark houses, the Golden Age atmosphere accompanies excellent French-inspired cuisine. **Vossius,** the hot spot of star chef Robert Kranenborg, may just be the most expensive place in town. Across the center of town at **L'Excelsior,** the tables are generously distanced, the wine list is long on three-digit vintages from la belle France, and the punctilious waiters know when to light the

candles and stop hovering. Timing the removal of the dishes with amazing grace, they may glide up to your table with a succulent roast lamb or Dover sole with chanterelles. **La Rive's** comfortable armchairs are never sullied by wallets (they are worn inside suit pockets or carried in diamond-spangled handbags); it's the quintessential place to spend lots of money on classic, Michelin-starred French food. **De Kas,** in a reconverted hothouse, is a hip gold mine: There's no menu, just the chef's picks of the day, and the drinks, dessert, and coffee push the tab through the glass roof. **Bordewijk,** near Noorderkerk in the Jordaan, attracts a similarly chic clientele with its stellar French/Italian food. Nearby **Christophe,** a French restaurant favored by Amsterdam's beau monde, is a great place to squander the company's euros on tempting French regional dishes. At designer-chic **Blakes,** feast on Thai/Italian/French delicacies prepared by celeb chef Schilo van Coevorden; the prices are breathtaking.

Alfresco... **Moko** must be the most attractive spot in town for fine-weather dining. Its terrace is under the big old trees on Amstelveld, bordering Prinsengracht. There is no traffic, lovers stroll along the canal, kids play soccer in the cobbled square, and behind is the old wooden Amstelkerk (the restaurant's dining room is actually in the church's basement). The fusion-Med food on the menu is competent, but then you really didn't come for the food, anyway. **Albatros Seafoodhouse,** a friendly, simple fish restaurant, has a narrow terrace on the sidewalk where in summer you can watch the seagulls and albatrosses flying overhead. Soak up the atmospheric Jordaan, where there's little traffic and locals chatting on stoops. Trendy **Wilhelmina-Dok** has great riverside views of the IJ from its big windows and a large outdoor terrace across the water from the cruiseliner Passenger Terminal Amsterdam. In summer at **Le Pêcheur,** you can dine on fresh fish in a lovely, flower-filled backyard; a few doors down is **Sahid Jaya,** probably the most luxurious and pricey of Amsterdam's Indonesian restaurants, which also has a pleasant backyard terrace amid Golden Bend mansions.

Take me to the river... For a city built on dozens of canals and two big rivers—the Amstel and the IJ—it's amazing how few restaurants take advantage of the waterfront real

estate; you can count them on the claws of one paw. Some of the well-heeled diners at **L'Excelsior** arrive by boat at the Hotel de L'Europe's private dock on the Amstel, ready to dine on classic French food. Down the river a half mile or so, with its own private dock, is another formal French choice, **La Rive,** the Amstel Inter-Continental's posh and much-touted dining room. When you disembark from your saloon boat and settle into the dining room, which sits almost at water level, you feel like you're on a luxury liner, with canal-boats and yachts cruising past the windows. When those same boats and ships decide to head to sea, they sail down the IJ within view of trendy **Wilhelmina-Dok,** practically the only restaurant in town where you're aware of the sea and port traffic—once Amsterdam's lifeblood.

Cafes

Vintage brown cafes... **Café Chris** is the oldest of them all (1624), a Jordaan institution with beer mugs hanging from the ceiling, a pool table, and an old chain-pull toilet that you actually flush from the main room (now there's atmosphere for you). **De Karpershoek,** across from Centraal Station, comes in second (1629) and attracts a blue-collar crowd to its smoky, darkwood interior and sandy floor, while **De Druif,** the third-oldest (1631), out east near the Maritime Museum, claims to be older than them all. It's the archetypal neighborhood hangout, with old *jenever* and beer barrels piled high behind the bar, and a mezzanine where the regulars perch like voluble old parrots. **Papeneiland,** from 1642, is a Jordaan hangout near Noorderkerk, with beautiful delft tiles and a cast-iron stove. **Café Hegeraad,** another vintage Jordaan place, is especially lively on market days. **Hoppe** is favored by well-heeled locals and the Spui literary set; it's great for studying the human comedy from a lively terrace. **Café Mulder,** on the southern edge of central Amsterdam on Weteringlaan, has a gorgeous interior with etched glass, a hummy barkeep, and carpets on the tables. **De Sluyswacht** has a nondescript interior but panoramic terraces overlooking a lock on the Oude Schans canal; boats glide under your table. **'t Smalle,** a relative newcomer (founded in 1786), is among the Jordaan's most popular spots, with a tiny dock terrace under trees, packed with trendies and locals.

Neobrowns... **Ruk & Pluk** is run by a famous gay couple of the same names; it's wild, festive, campy, and located way out east of Oosterpark. **Schaak Café Het Hok** is a smoky, friendly place near Leidseplein where fans of Amsterdam's soccer team, Ajax, play chess—there are stop clocks hung from the rafters. **Café Thijssen,** on the Jordaan's northern edge, could be in Paris, and so could the pretentiously hip clientele. **Café Daalder,** also in the Jordaan, has great apple pie, a nice terrace, and attracts a less self-important crowd. **Het Molenpad,** a Grachtengordel hangout, has a clubby, chummy feel inside, plus a wonderful canal-side summer terrace. **De Engelbewaarder,** full of cig and dope smoke, is a self-styled "literary cafe" east of the Red-Light District where self-styled intellectuals listen to jazz on Sunday afternoons. **De IJsbreker,** with a big tree-shaded terrace on the east bank of the Amstel River, is the trendy, neobrown section of the celebrated music club of the same name.

White cafes... White cafes are the spiritual antithesis to brown cafes. They're modern, hip, cool, trendy, stylish, designery—everything brown cafes aren't. They're sometimes referred to collectively as the coketrail circuit. **Dantzig** is a spacious place attached to city hall and the Muziektheater complex, with a library corner and a wraparound Amstel River terrace that's great for poseurs. **De Jaren,** on the Amstel 90m (295 ft.) north, is another big, sunny spot, with a panoramic upper-floor terrace where the young and hip survey the city in sweet, smoky anonymity.

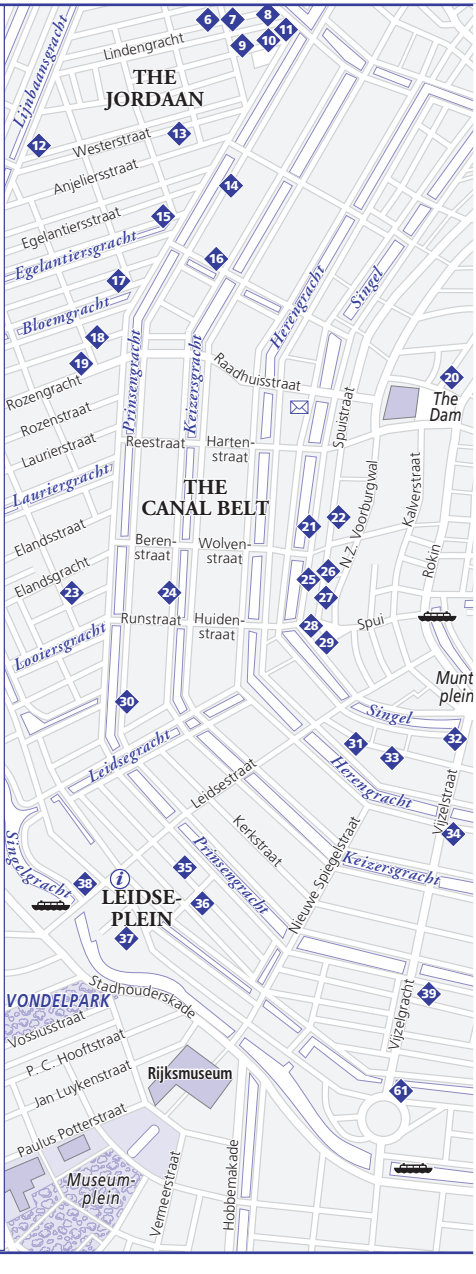
Designer cafes... **Royal Café de Kroon** is where media culture-vultures gather, either at the yard-wide zinc bar (flanked by bizarre displays of butterflies, bugs, and dusty bones) or on the enclosed, second-story terrace overlooking the rabble below on Rembrandtplein. **Café Luxembourg,** at Spui, draws much the same crowd (plus white collars) to its mock-old interior and enclosed terrace. **In de Waag,** inside a medieval tower, is a hip cafe/restaurant at Nieuwmarkt. **Wildschut,** near the Concertgebouw, features designer 25- to 35-year-olds in an early-1900s Amsterdam School building with stained glass, booths, armchairs, and a wraparound banquette. At **Gambit**—one of a contingent of so-called "chess cafes"—regulars, and the occasional visitor, play chess, dominoes, and other board games in a cozy, smoky setting in the Jordaan.

Best cafe food... **Dantzig,** a big, bright white cafe attached to city hall, serves great *bitterballen,* croquettes, egg rolls, *sate* chicken, and daily specials; it's a good place for a pre- or post-theater snack. **Café Luxembourg,** a designer cafe at Spui, gets a lot of its food from top restaurants and has the best croquettes (from Holtkamp; see the Shopping chapter), dim sum, chicken *sate,* salads, and sandwiches of all the city's cafes. **Papeneiland,** a 1642 brown near Noorderkerk, serves the best hot-pastrami sandwich in town, plus a tasty onion soup. **Café Daalder,** a neobrown in the Jordaan, makes some of the best apple pie and sandwiches in town. **Het Molenpad,** another neobrown, has great sandwiches and daily specials to match its chummy atmosphere and classic jazz tapes. **De IJsbreker,** part of the music club of the same name, serves Sunday breakfast, plus good soups and sandwiches. **De Jaren** is a sunny white on the Amstel with a great salad bar, soups, and good daily quiches; the regular restaurant here features unnecessarily complicated dishes.

Map 7: Central Amsterdam Dining & Cafes

CAFES
CaféChris **18**
CaféDaalder **6**
CaféHegeraad **9**
CaféLuxembourg **29**
CaféMulder **61**
CaféThijssen **8**
Dantzig **49**
De Engelbewaarder **45**
De Ijsbreker **60**
De Jaren **47**
De Karpershoek **41**
De Sluyswacht **46**
Gambit **17**
Het Molenpad **30**
Hoppe **28**
In de Waag **44**
In de Wildeman **42**
Papeneiland **11**
Royal Caféde Kroon **52**
Schaak CaféHet Hok **36**
't Smalle **15**

RESTAURANTS
Albatros Seafoodhouse **12**
Bananarama **13**
Blakes **24**
Bojo **35**
Bordewijk **10**
CaféAméricain **38**
Caruso **32**
Christophe **16**
De Roode Leeuw **20**
De Silveren Spiegel **40**
D'Vijff Vlieghen **25**
De Vrolijke Abrikoos **58**
Duende **7**
Golden Temple **57**
Haesje Claes **26**
L'Excelsior **50**
Le Pêcheur **33**
Long Pura **19**
Lucius **22**
Memories of India **53**
Moko **56**
Pancake Bakery **14**
Piet de Leeuw Steakhouse **39**
Rakang Thai **23**
Sahid Jaya **31**
Shiva **34**
Tapas Bar Català **27**
Tempo Doeloe **55**
Tom Yam Fusion Cuisine **48**
Traiterie Grekas **21**
Tujuh Maret **54**
Van Dobben **51**
Vermeer **43**
Wagamama **37**
Yoichi **59**



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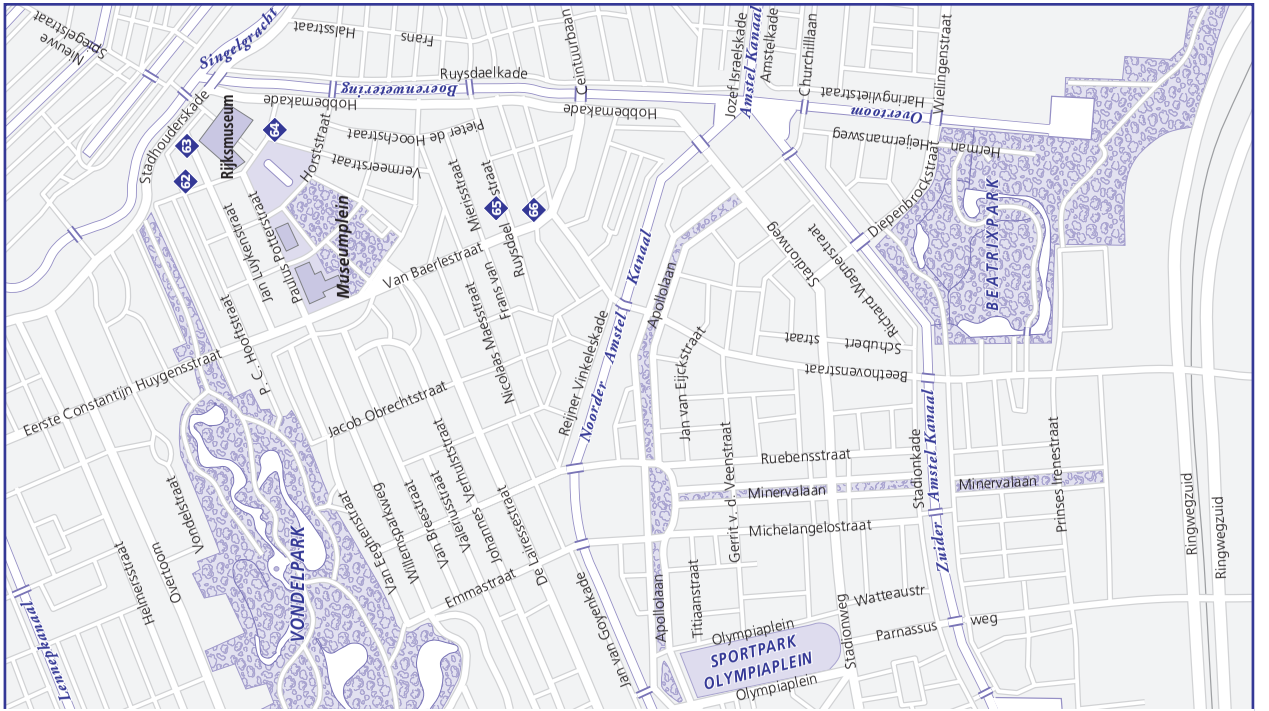
Damrak
THE CENTER
Nieuwendijk
Zeedijk
Geldersekade
Kromme Waal
Oude Waal
Wals Eilandsgracht
Oosterdok
IJ-Tunnel
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudekerksplein
Warmoesstraat
Nieuwmarkt
Schans
Oude
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat
Uilenburgergracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Hoogtekadijk
Entrepotdok
Plantage Doklaan
Oudezijds Kolkje
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Waterlooplein
Mr. Visserplein
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Herengracht
OOST (EAST)
ARTIS
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
Plantage Muidergracht
Nieuwe
Keizersgracht
REMBRANDTPLEIN
Amstel River
Nieuwe
Kerkstraat
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
Utrechtsestraat
Weesperstraat
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Falckstraat
Frederiksplein
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat

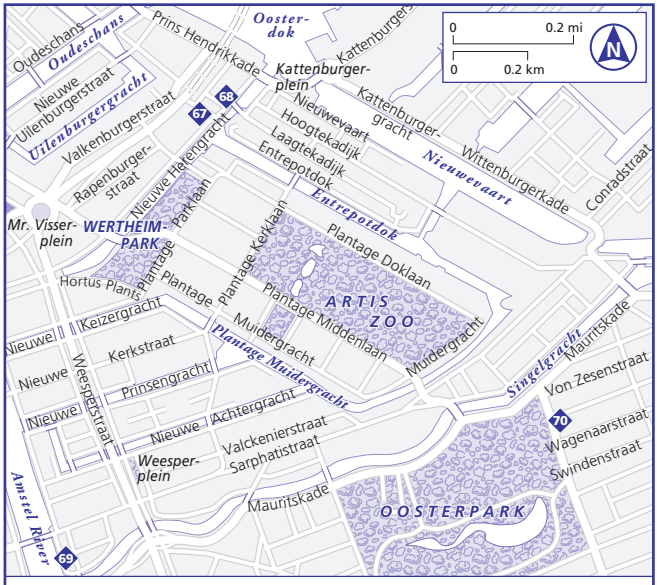
Map 8: Southern Amsterdam Dining & Cafes

Le Garage **65**
Sama Sebo **62**
Van Altena **63**
Vossius **64**
Wildschut **66**

DINING & CAFES



Map 9: Eastern Amsterdam Dining & Cafes



De Druif **67**
Kilimanjaro **68**
La Rive **69**
Ruk & Pluk **70**

The Index

Note:	1€ = $1.15U.S.
$$$$$	over 26€/$30
$$$$	17€–26€/$20–$30
$$$	13€–17€$15–$20
$$	6.50€–13€/$7.50–$15
$	under 6.50€/$7.50

Prices given are per person for entrees only.

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express
DISC	Discover
DC	Diners Club
MC	MasterCard
V	Visa

Albatros Seafoodhouse (p. 82, 86) JORDAAN *SEAFOOD* Serving fresh Atlantic and North Sea fish grilled, poached, and fried is the specialty at this neighborhood restaurant.... *Tel 020/627-9932. Westerstraat 264 at Lijnbaansgracht. Tram 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Reservations recommended. Open Thurs–Tues 6–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 12.

Amsterdam (p. 79, 83, 84) WEST *CONTINENTAL* A hip cafe and restaurant in a reconverted 19th-century water-pumping plant on the western edge of town. Authentic industrial decor, 100-foot ceilings, and machinery. The menu ranges from tomato soup to foie gras, calf's brain with sage, minty lamb stew—all of it astoundingly edible.... *Tel 020/682-2666. Watertorenplein 6 at Van Hallstraat. Tram 10 to Van Hallstraat. Open daily 11am–1am (till 2am Fri–Sat); meals served till 11:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 6 on p. 62, bullet 1.

Bananarama (p. 73) JORDAAN *FILIPINO* This Filipino bistro with faux-Gauguin murals (hmmm, wasn't he in Tahiti?), tall mirrors, and white tablecloths pulls in the hip youngish set for its classic *lumpia* (egg rolls) and tasty specialties like *adobong manok* (chicken with coconut, laurel, and black peppercorns).... *Tel 020/638-1039. Westerstraat 91 at Noordermarkt. Trams 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Open daily 6pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 13.

Blakes (p. 77, 78, 86) CANAL BELT *CONTINENTAL/WORLD* Chic-est of all of Amsterdam's new designer restaurants, located in Blakes Hotel. Presided over by affable celeb chef Schilo van Coevorden, master of Thai/Italian/French–inspired wonders.... *Tel 020/530-2010. Keizersgracht 384 at Runstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Reservations essential. Open Mon–Fri 7–11am, noon–2pm, and 6:30–11pm; Sat 7–11am and 6:30–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 24.

Bojo (p. 72, 80, 83) LEIDSEPLEIN *INDONESIAN* Amsterdam's long-established cheap and late-night Indonesian restaurant.... *Tel 020/622-7434. Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 51 at Leidsestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open 4pm–1am (till 4am Fri–Sat). No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 35.

Bordewijk (p. 75, 79, 86) JORDAAN *FRENCH/ITALIAN* The French/Italian–inspired menu is among the city's best, the postmodern setting endlessly hip.... *Tel 020/624-3899. Noordermarkt 7 at Prinsengracht. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Reservations essential. Open Tues–Sun 6:30–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 10.

Café Américain (p. 77, 79, 82, 83) LEIDSEPLEIN *CONTINENTAL* This landmark cafe's stunning Art Nouveau and Art Deco interior eclipses the overly ambitious, though perfectly edible, French-inspired food. Special theater menus, brunch, and high tea available.... *Tel 020/623-4813. Leidseplein 28 at Leidsekade. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily 10:30am–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 38.

Café Chris (p. 87) JORDAAN *CAFE* The oldest of the old browns, founded in 1624, and a local institution. Famous for Sunday afternoon opera tapes.... *Tel 020/624-5942. Bloemstraat 42 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 18.

Café Daalder (p. 88, 89) JORDAAN *CAFE* A neobrown—go on market days for the view.... *Tel 020/624-8864. Lindengracht 90 at Eerste Goudsbloemdwarsstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open Mon–Thurs 10am–1am, Fri–Sat 10am–2am. V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 6.

Café Hegeraad (p. 87) CANAL BELT/JORDAAN *CAFE* A vintage brown behind Noorderkerk, with carpets on the tables.... *Tel 020/624-5565. Noordermarkt 34 at Prinsengracht. Trams 1, 2,*

5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 9.

Café Luxembourg (p. 88, 89) CENTER *CAFE* A slick crowd blends into the designer decor.... *Tel 020/620-6264. Spui 22–24 at Spuistraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Sun–Thurs 9am–1am, Fri–Sat 9am–2am. AE, DC, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 29.

Café Mulder (p. 87) MUSEUM DISTRICT *CAFE* A handsome old brown on the southern edge of central Amsterdam.... *Tel 020/623-7874. Weteringschans 163 at Vijzelgracht. Trams 6, 7, 10, 16, 24, 25 to Weteringcircuit. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 61.

Café Thijssen (p. 88) JORDAAN *CAFE* This hip neobrown on the Jordaan's northern edge is best on Lindengracht market days.... *Tel 020/623-8994. Brouwersgracht 107 at Lindengracht. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 8.

Caruso (p. 74, 80) CENTER *MODERN ITALIAN* Italian *nuova cucina* served in an operatic bordello setting—some of the city's best Italian (and fish) dishes are here.... *Tel 020/623-8320. Singel 550 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Reservations recommended. Jacket and tie recommended. Open daily 6:30–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

SeeMap 7 on p. 90, bullet 32.

Christophe (p. 70, 75, 86) CANAL BELT *FRENCH* Chef Jean Christophe Royer's eponymous restaurant—très French and superb. Casual-chic dress.... *Tel 020/625-0807. Leliegracht 46 at Keizersgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Reservations essential. Tues–Sat 6:30–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 16.

Dantzig (p. 88, 89) WATERLOOPLEIN *CAFE* A spacious white cafe with a river terrace, at city hall; tasty food.... *Tel 020/620-9039. Zwanenburgwal 15 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1am, Fri–Sun 11am–2am. AE, DC, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 49.

De Druif (p. 87) EASTERN DOCKS *CAFE* Though it claims an even earlier pedigree, Druif is the third-oldest brown, dating to 1631. Far-flung, near the Maritime Museum, and probably the friendliest, most authentic of them all.... *Tel 020/624-4530. Rapenburg 83 at Rapenburgerplein. Buses 22, 32 to Kadijksplein. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 9 on p. 94, bullet 67.

De Engelbewaarder (p. 88) CENTER *CAFE* A literary neobrown east of the Red-Light District—wonderfully pretentious, surprisingly seedy.... *Tel 020/625-3772. Kloveniersburgwal 59 at Raamgracht. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Open daily 11am–2am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 45.

De IJsbreker (p. 88, 89) EAST *CAFE* A neobrown on the east bank of the river, attached to the celebrated music club of the same name (see the Entertainment and Nightlife chapters). Great Amstel-side terrace.... *Tel 020/668-1805. Weesperzijde 23 at Ruyschstraat. Tram 3 to Wibautstraat. Open daily 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 60.

De Jaren (p. 88, 89) CENTER *CAFE* A postmodern, big, and sunny white cafe overlooking the Amstel near Muntplein, where beautiful young Amsterdammers lounge on the terrace.... *Tel 020/625-5771. Nieuwe Doelenstraat 20–22 at Kloveniersburgwal. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Sun–Thurs 10am–1am, Fri–Sat 10am–2am. V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 47.

De Karpershoek (p. 87) CENTER *CAFE* The second-oldest brown, from 1629. Prototypical, and within shouting distance of Centraal Station.... *Tel 020/624-7886. Martelaarsgracht 2 at Prins Hendrikkade. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 41.

De Kas (p. 75, 77, 78, 86) SOUTH *CONTINENTAL* Hip new restaurant, owned by celeb chef Gertjan Hageman, in a reconverted hothouse. The French-Dutch specialties change daily. No menu: It's the chef's call.... *Tel 020/462-4562. www.restaurantdekas.nl. Kamerlingh Onneslaan 3 at Middenweg. Tram 9 to Hogeweg. Open Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6:30–10pm, Sat 6:30–10pm. Reservations essential. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 6 on p. 62, bullet 5.

De Roode Leeuw (p. 70, 79, 84) CENTER *DUTCH* Great Dutch regional cuisine served in a cozily kitsch, old-fashioned interior. Try the dried *nagelhout* beef or braised codfish with mustard sauce.... *Tel 020/555-0666. www.hotelamsterdam.nl. Damrak 93–94 at the Dam. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 7–10am and noon–10pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 20.

De Silveren Spiegel (p. 76, 77, 85) CENTER *FRENCH/DUTCH* A top-dollar French/Dutch restaurant. You'll pay dearly for delicious dishes like duck breast on a bed of leeks with tiny corn pancakes or leg and filet of guinea fowl with wild mushrooms.... *Tel 020/624-6589. Kattengat 4 at Spuistraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17*

to Martelaarsgracht. Reservations required. Jacket and tie recommended. Open daily 6–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 40.

De Sluyswacht (p. 87) CENTER *CAFE* A 1695 brown with canalside terraces, bordering the Jewish Quarter.... *Tel 020/625-7611. Joodenbreestraat 1 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 46.

De Vrolijke Abrikoos (p. 82, 84) CENTER *VEGETARIAN* The biodynamically grown veggie goodies taste better than the name sounds. Big nonsmoking section weekdays only.... *Tel 020/624-4672. Weteringschans 76 at Reguliersgracht. Trams 6, 7, 10, 16, 24, 25 to Weteringcircuit. Open daily 5:30–11pm. Reservations recommended. MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 58.

Duende (p. 75) JORDAAN *SPANISH (TAPAS)* This hip tapas bar in the Jordaan has tile floors, wooden tables, and a summer terrace out front.... *Tel 020/420-6692. Lindengracht 62 at Noordermarkt. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open daily 5pm–1am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 7.

D'Vijff Vlieghen (p. 70, 81) CENTER *DUTCH* A must for the decor alone: dark wood paneling and a labyrinth of timbered rooms. The Dutch-Continental fare is surprisingly edible.... *Tel 020/530-4060. Spuistraat 294–302 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Reservations recommended. Open daily 5:30pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 25.

Gambit (p. 88) JORDAAN *CAFE* One of Amsterdam's most competitive "chess cafes".... *Tel 020/622-1801. Bloemgracht 20 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 17.

Golden Temple (p. 82, 85) CENTER *VEGETARIAN* In its fourth decade of tickling meat-shunning palates, this temple of taste is still one of the best vegetarian (and vegan) options in town.... *Tel 020/626-8560. Utrechtsestraat 126 at Frederiksplein. Tram 4 to Prinsengracht. Open daily 5–10pm. MC, V.*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 57.

Haesje Claes (p. 70, 80, 81, 83, 84) CENTER *DUTCH* This quintessential but endearingly *gezellig* tourist trap actually serves excellent *stamppot* (mashed potatoes with sauerkraut and pork ribs) and salad with herring and smoked eel.... *Tel 020/624-9998. www.haesjeclaes.nl. Spuistraat 273–275 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Reservations recommended. Open daily noon–10pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 26.

Het Molenpad (p. 88, 89) CANAL BELT *CAFE* Neobrown neighborhood cafe with clubby atmosphere, jazz tapes, and some of the best cafe food in town day and night (sandwiches, daily specials). Canal-side terrace.... *Tel 020/625-9680. Prinsengracht 653 at Leidsegracht. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Prinsengracht. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sun 11am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 30.

Hoppe (p. 87) CENTER *CAFE* A vintage brown, from 1670, that's a great place to people-watch.... *Tel 020/420-4420. Spui 18–20 at Singel. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 28.

In de Waag (p. 88) CENTER *CAFE* Trendy cafe in a centuries-old tower.... *Tel 020/422-7772. Nieuwmarkt 4. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Open Sun–Thurs 10am–1am, Fri–Sat 10am–2am. AE, DC, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 44.

In de Wildeman (p. 82) CENTER *BAR* This beer bar, down an Old Amsterdam alley, started life in 1690 as a distillery; it serves more than 200 beers. Nonsmoking room.... *Tel 020/638-2348. Kolksteeg 3 at Nieuwendijk. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Nieuwezijds Kolk. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 42.

Kilimanjaro (p. 74) EASTERN DOCKS *AFRICAN* This chic African restaurant with only seven tables is run by a Dutchman, but the Ethiopian cook makes a variety of East African specialties.... *Tel 020/622-3485. Rapenburgerplein 6 at Prins Hendrikkade. Buses 22, 32 to Kadijksplein. Reservations essential. Tues–Sun 6pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 9 on p. 94, bullet 68.

L'Angoletto (p. 74, 84) OLD SOUTH *ITALIAN* Utterly unpretentious, it's run by young Italians who make good classic pizzas, pasta dishes, and meat.... *Tel 020/676-4182. Hemonystraat 18 at Govert Flinckstraat. Tram 4 to Stadhouderskade. Reservations recommended. Open Sun–Fri 6–11pm. No credit cards. $$*

See Map 6 on p. 62, bullet 4.

La Rive (p. 76, 79, 84, 86, 87) EAST *DUTCH/FRENCH* Dutch-French food by celeb chef Edwin Kats at ultraluxe restaurant.... *Tel 020/622-6060. Professor Tulpplein 1 at the Amstel. Trams 6, 7, 10 to Sarphatistraat. Reservations essential. Jacket and tie recommended. Open Mon–Fri noon–2pm, Mon–Sat 6:30–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 9 on p. 94, bullet 69.

Le Garage (p. 76, 78, 83) MUSEUM DISTRICT *FUSION* It's a cross between a Parisian brasserie, a Tuscan trattoria, and a noisy Las Vegas nightclub. Nonetheless, the wildly creative food is virtuoso stuff. Chic dress.... *Tel 020/679-7176. Ruysdaelstraat 54–56 at*

Van Baerlestraat. Trams 3, 5, 12, 24 to Roelof Hartplein. Reservations essential. Open Mon–Fri noon–3pm and daily 6–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$

See Map 8 on p. 92, bullet 65.

Le Pêcheur **(p. 78, 80, 82, 83, 86)** CENTER *SEAFOOD* This upscale fish restaurant run by Rien van Santen has a flower-filled backyard on the Golden Bend and fresh, highest-quality seafood.... *Tel 020/624-3121. Reguliersdwarsstraat 32 at Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. Open Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat 5pm–midnight. AE, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 33.

L'Excelsior **(p. 76, 79, 84, 85, 87)** CENTER *FRENCH* Michelin stars come and go, but this perennial French restaurant at the Hotel de L'Europe stays.... *Tel 020/531-1778. Nieuwe Doelenstraat 2–8 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Reservations recommended. Jacket and tie required. Open Mon–Fri 7am–11am, 12:30–2:30pm, and 7–10:30pm; Sat–Sun 7am–11am, 7–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 50.

Long Pura **(p. 72, 77, 80)** JORDAAN *INDONESIAN* Swank Indonesian restaurant. Costumed waiters, neocolonial decor, fresh orchids to put behind your ears. Happily, the food is great—some of the best *sambal goreng udang petjel* (shrimp and petjel beans with spicy coconut milk sauce) in town. Steep prices (for Indonesian food) but worth it.... *Tel 020/623-8950. Rozengracht 46–48 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open daily 6pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 19.

Lucius **(p. 77, 82, 83)** CENTER *SEAFOOD* Run by friendly George and Marleen Lodewijks, this is among the city's liveliest fish restaurants.... *Tel 020/624-1831. Spuistraat 247 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open daily 5pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 22.

Memories of India **(p. 83)** REMBRANDTPLEIN *INDIAN* Upscale, authentic Indian food. Don't miss the perfumed chapatis and nans, spicy lamb vindaloo, and tender tandoori chicken.... *Tel 020/623-5710. Reguliersdwarsstraat 88 at Vijzelstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open daily 5–11:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 53.

Moko **(p. 80, 86)** CANAL BELT *FUSION* This is among the prettiest, friendliest cafe/restaurant combos in town. The food is fusion-Med.... *Tel 020/626-1199. www.moko.nl. Amstelveld 12 at Prinsengracht. Tram 4 to Prinsengracht. Reservations recommended. Open Mon–Fri 11:30am–1am, Sat–Sun 11:30am–2am. Closed Mon Nov–April. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 56.

Pancake Bakery (p. 71, 80, 81, 84) CANAL BELT *DUTCH (PANCAKES)* In the basement of a converted Prinsengracht warehouse. Of the 70 pancakes offered, first on the list is the "American Pancake," which boasts fried chicken, sweet corn, paprika, carrots, and spicy Cajun sauce.... *Tel 020/625-1333. Prinsengracht 191 at Prinsenstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open daily noon–9:30pm. AE, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 14.

Papeneiland (p. 87, 89) CANAL BELT *CAFE* A vintage brown (1642) near Noorderkerk.... *Tel 020/624-1989. Prinsengracht 2–4 at Brouwersgracht. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 11.

Piet de Leeuw Steakhouse (p. 71, 83) CANAL BELT *DUTCH (STEAKS)* In the States it would be called "Pete's Place" or "The Lion," with a dark, cozy interior that smells slightly of beer. The famous (and delicious) artery-clogging beefsteak with onions is fantastic.... *Tel 020/623-7181. Noorderstraat 11 at Vijzelgracht. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Prinsengracht. Open Mon–Fri noon–11pm, Sat–Sun 5–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 39.

Rakang Thai (p. 73, 79) JORDAAN *THAI* A stylish Jordaan restaurant packed with trendies. Try the squid or chicken with lemon grass and coriander, sticky rice, or beef with peppers and basil.... *Tel 020/627-5012 or 020/620-9551. Elandsgracht 29 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 7, 10, 17 to Elandsgracht. Open daily 6pm–midnight. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 23.

Royal Café de Kroon (p. 88) REMBRANDTPLEIN *CAFE* A vast designer cafe with a great view of Rembrandtplein from its big picture windows. The media crowd hangs out here.... *Tel 020/625-2011. Rembrandtplein 17. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Sun–Thurs 10am–1am, Fri–Sat 10am–2am. AE, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 52.

Ruk & Pluk (p. 88) EAST *CAFE* One-of-a-kind neobrown way out east of Oosterpark, with a *Cage aux Folles* carnival spirit. Crowd and decor to match.... *Tel 020/665-3248. Linnaeusstraat 48 at Oosterpark. Tram 9, 14 to Eerste Van Swindenstraat. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 9 on p. 94, bullet 70.

Sahid Jaya (p. 72, 86) CENTER *INDONESIAN* Alfresco dining and the sumptuous, if inauthentic, rice tables (dozens of dishes, from chicken *sate* in peanut sauce to *rendang padang*—beef with chile and coconut sauce) help alleviate the pain of the bill. Tasteful Indonesian luxury interior, polished service.... *Tel 020/626-3727.*

Reguliersdwarsstraat 26 at Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Koningsplein. Open daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 31.

Sama Sebo **(p. 72, 78)** MUSEUM DISTRICT *INDONESIAN* Among the city's least-undiscovered Indonesian spots, with lots of small tables where you eat increasingly overrated *rijsttafel* elbow-to-elbow with connoisseurs and crowds of bemused tourists.... *Tel 020/662-8146. Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat 27 at Museum District. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat. Open Mon–Sat noon–2pm and 6–10pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 8 on p. 92, bullet 62.

Schaak Café Het Hok **(p. 88)** LEIDSEPLEIN *CAFE* A brown cafe favored by soccer fans and chess players.... *Tel 020/624-3133. Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 134 at Leidsekruisstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 36.

Shiva **(p. 73)** REMBRANDTPLEIN *INDIAN* This small, refined Indian restaurant serves flavorful curries, possibly Amsterdam's best.... *Tel 020/624-8713. Reguliersdwarsstraat 72 at Vijzelstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open daily 5–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 34.

Tapas Bar Català **(p. 75, 83)** CENTER *SPANISH (TAPAS)* Belly, shout, and elbow your way through the cocktail-lounge interior to the best tapas bar in town.... *Tel 020/623-1141. Spuistraat 299 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Fri 4pm–midnight, Sat–Sun 1pm–1am. No credit cards. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 27.

Tempo Doeloe **(p. 72, 80, 83, 85)** CENTER *INDONESIAN* If you're eating just one Indonesian meal in town, this is probably still the place to go. Try the succulent *oedang madoera* (prawns in a gentle macadamia-nut sauce).... *Tel 020/625-6718. Utrechtsestraat 75 at Keizersgracht. Tram 4 to Keizersgracht. Reservations recommended. Open Mon–Sat 6–11:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 55.

Tom Yam Fusion Cuisine **(p. 78)** CENTER *DUTCH/THAI* Former Michelin-starred Dutch/French chef Jos Boomgaardt now cooks fusion food (for example, puff pastry with guinea fowl, sauerkraut, and mashed potatoes) in this upscale Dutch/Thai restaurant, where the dishes are beautifully presented but overpriced and underspiced.... *Tel 020/622-9533. Staalstraat 22 at Groenburgwal. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Reservations required. Open dinner only Tues–Sat 6–11pm. Closed Sun–Mon. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 48.

Traiterie Grekas (p. 75, 80) CANAL BELT *GREEK* This spotlessly clean takeout joint with just a few tables serves the city's tastiest Greek food.... *Tel 020/620-3590. Singel 311 at Oude Spiegelstraat (across the canal). Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Wed–Sun 5–10pm. No credit cards. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 21.

't Smalle (p. 87) JORDAAN *CAFE* Founded as a distillery in 1786, this popular brown is near Westerkerk.... *Tel 020/623-9617. Egelantiersgracht 12 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Thurs 11am–1 or 2am, Fri–Sat 10am–2 or 3am. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 15.

Tujuh Maret (p. 72) CENTER *INDONESIAN* Small, welcoming Indonesian restaurant (eat in or take out) run by veteran restaurateur Thomas Hart.... *Tel 020/427-9865. Utrechtsestraat 73 at Keizersgracht. Tram 4 to Keizersgracht or Prinsengracht. Open Tues–Sat 12:30–11pm, Sun 4–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 54.

Van Altena (p. 71) MUSEUM DISTRICT *SEAFOOD* The city's premier herring stand. A very serious operation where master fish-handler Pieter van Altena serves raw and pickled herring, salmon or crab salad, and a dozen other fishy delights on warm whole-grain buns.... *Tel 020/676-9139. Stadhouderskade at the Rijksmuseum. Trams 6, 7, 10 to Spiegelgracht. Open Tues–Sun 11am–7pm. No credit cards. $*

See Map 8 on p. 92, bullet 63.

Van Dobben (p. 71, 80, 83, 84) REMBRANDTPLEIN *DUTCH (SNACKS/SANDWICHES)* Time has stood still since June 1945, when this wonderful milk-and-soda diner served its first scorching-hot croquette and smoked-eel sandwich. A must.... *Tel 020/624-4200. Korte Reguliersdwarsstraat 5 at Rembrandtplein. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Mon–Thurs 9:30am–1am, Fri–Sat 9:30am–2am, Sun 11:30am–8pm. No credit cards. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 51.

Vermeer (p. 76, 84, 85) CENTER *FRENCH/DUTCH* The old-fashioned interior is a setting for celeb chef Pascal Jalhaij's French-Dutch cuisine (smoked pigeon with roasted pineapple or braised calves cheeks on sauerkraut).... *Tel 020/556-4885. Prins Hendrikkade 59–72 at Zeedijk. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. Reservations essential. Jacket and tie recommended. AE, DC, MC, V. Open Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–10pm, Sat 6–10pm. $$$$$*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 43.

Vossius (p. 75, 78, 85) MUSEUM DISTRICT *FRENCH/DUTCH* Star chef Robert Kranenborg's temple of French-Dutch gastronomy.... *Tel 020/577-4100. www.restaurantvossius.com. Hobbemastraat 2*

at Museum District. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat. Reservations essential. Open Mon–Sat noon–2pm and 7–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$$$

See Map 8 on p. 92, bullet 64.

Wagamama (p. 73, 82, 85) LEIDSEPLEIN *JAPANESE/NOODLES* New, ultraclean, Zen-style Japanese noodle bar (ramen, kare, gyoza, udon, and other noodle or rice combos). Totally nonsmoking, veg- and kid-friendly.... *Tel 020/528-7778, www.wagamama.com. Max Euweplein 10 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily noon–11pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $*

See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 37.

Warung Marlon (p. 73, 80, 82) OLD SOUTH *SURINAMESE* Amsterdam's most authentic, if spartan, Surinamese eatery. Great roasted meats and rice or banana-based specialties. Totally nonsmoking.... *Tel 020/671-1526. Eerste Van der Helstraat 55 at Govert Flinckstraat. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Albert Cuypstraat. Open Wed–Mon 11am–8pm. No credit cards. $*

See Map 6 on p. 62, bullet 3.

Wildschut (p. 88) MUSEUM DISTRICT *CAFE* A designer cafe in an Amsterdam School building near the Concertgebouw.... *Tel 020/676-8220. Roelof Hartplein 1–3 at Van Baerlestraat. Trams 3, 5, 12, 24 to Roelof Hartstraat. Open Mon–Thurs 9am–1am, Fri 9am–3am, Sat 10:30am–3am, Sun 9:30am–midnight. MC, V. $*

See Map 8 on p. 92, bullet 66.

Wilhelmina-Dok (p. 81, 86, 87) NOORD *CONTINENTAL* Waterfront eatery in Amsterdam Noord, across the IJ waterway from Centraal Station, that more than justifies a short, free ferry-boat ride across the IJ followed by a 5-minute walk.... *Tel 020/632-3701. Nordwal 1 at IJplein. Ferry: IJveer from Pier 8 behind Centraal Station to the dock at IJplein, then go right along the dike-top path. Open Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat–Sun noon–1am. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

See Map 6 on p. 62, bullet 2.

Yoichi (p. 73) CENTER *JAPANESE* The sashimi-tako (octopus), charcoal-grilled teriyaki steak, and sukiyaki beef with veggies rank with the best.... *Tel 020/622-6829. Weteringschans 128 at Reguliersgracht. Trams 4, 6, 7, 10 to Frederiksplein. Reservations recommended. Open Thurs–Tues 6–10:30pm. AE, DC, MC, V. $$$*

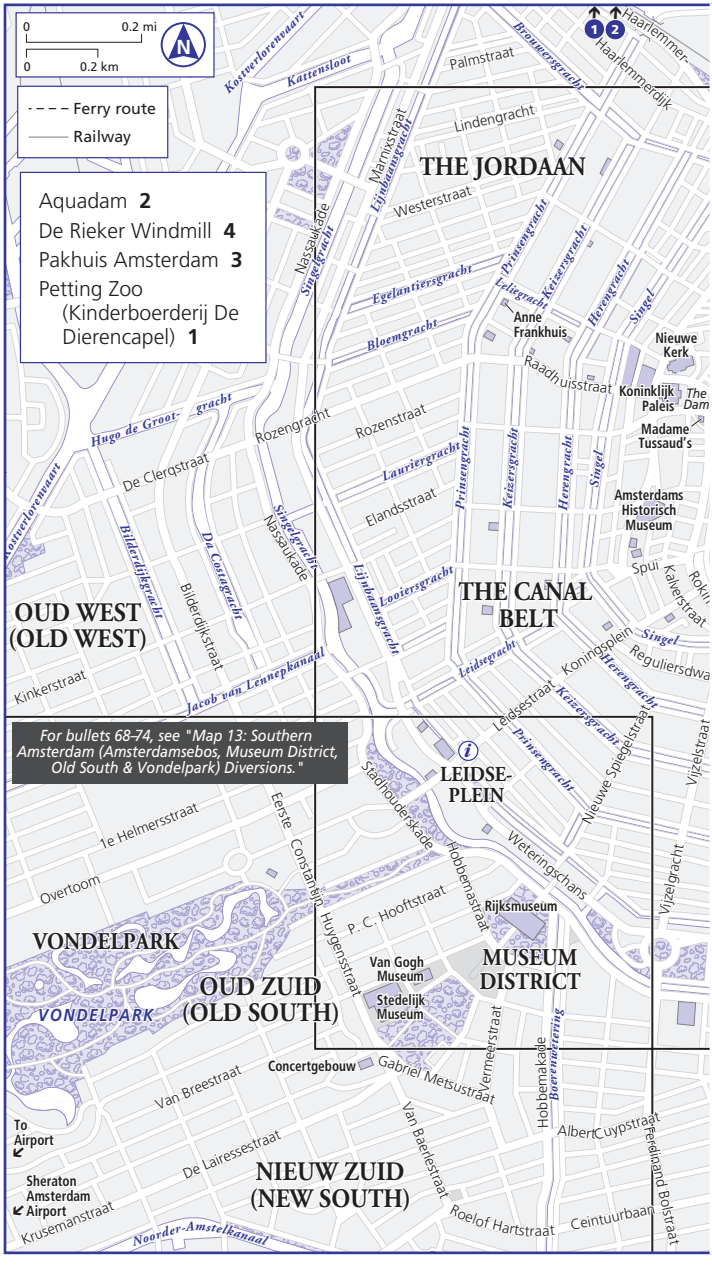
See Map 7 on p. 90, bullet 59.

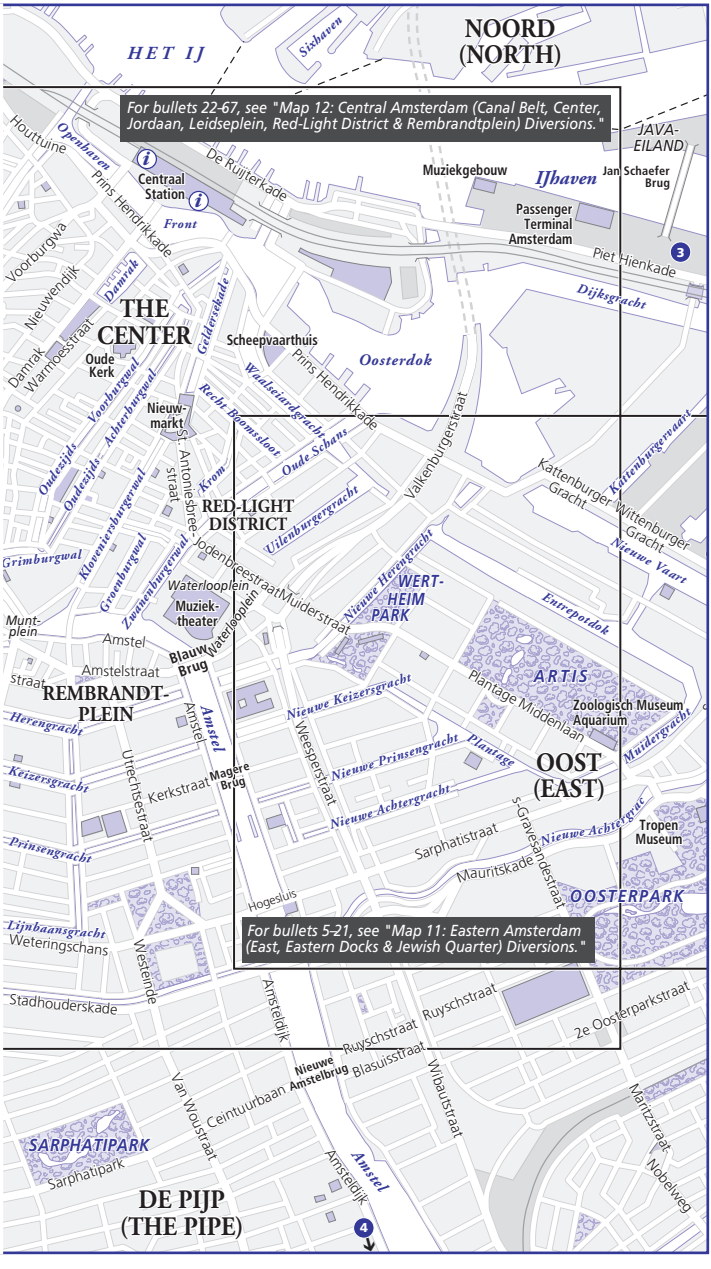
DIVER

SIONS

3

Map 10: Amsterdam Diversions




HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD (NORTH)
For bullets 22-67, see "Map 12: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Diversions."
Houttuine
Openhaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Centraal Station
De Ruijterkade
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer Brug
JAVA-EILAND
Front
Passenger Terminal Amsterdam
Piet Heinkade
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Dijksgracht
THE CENTER
Warmoesstraat
Geldersekade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Oude Kerk
Waalseilandsgracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Nieuw-markt
Recht Boomssloot
Oude Schans
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Krom
Valkenburgerstraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburgerstraat
Wittenburger Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Uilenburgergracht
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgwal
Jodenbreestraat
Waterlooplein
Muziek-theater
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-HEIM PARK
Entrepotdok
Munt-plein
Amstel
Blauwbrug
Amstelstraat
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum Aquarium
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Herengracht
Amstel
Weesperstraat
Muidergracht
Keizersgracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere Brug
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Planetarium
OOST (EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Tropen Museum
Prinsengracht
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
s-Gravesandestraat
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
For bullets 5-21, see "Map 11: Eastern Amsterdam (East, Eastern Docks & Jewish Quarter) Diversions."
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westeinde
Stadhouderskade
Amsteldijk
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
Nieuwe Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
Mantzstraat
Nobelweg
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amsteldijk
DE PIJP (THE PIPE)
4

Basic Stuff

Everyone seems to tell the same standard story about a first trip to Amsterdam. First you go to the appropriate cafe to either eat hash brownies or drink *jenever,* then you get lost in the canals, roam the Red-Light District, see a live sex show "by mistake," and finally end up at the Van Gogh Museum.

If you want to come home with more than the same standard story, you have to know how to approach this city. The whole of central Amsterdam, within the semicircular Singelgracht canal, could fit on the tip of Manhattan. Add in the 19th-century Old West, Old South, and East neighborhoods, with the main museums, Vondelpark, and Artis Zoo, and you've got a midsize town. But don't let the size fool you: The number and quality of attractions is very high indeed. It takes time to discover and explore them. So do like the locals and bring clothes in which you can comfortably pedal one of the city's 500,000 old-fashioned *fietsen* (bikes), and most important, a pair of sturdy walking shoes. Amsterdam is not just a stroller's city. It is *the* stroller's city.

Amsterdammers are very proud of their doll's house of a capital, and do their sightseeing and cultural accounts like CPAs. Within this densely populated cosmopolis of 725,000 inhabitants are about 7,000 landmark buildings (from the 16th through the 18th centuries), 2,400 houseboats (probably closer to 5,000, with half docked illegally), and 1,400 cafes and bars. Not to mention the 1,281 bridges (eight of them wooden drawbridges) spanning 165 canals and rivers, or the 28 parks and 42 museums. These numbers are important—everyone knows them. In fact, an obsession with the huge, the minuscule, and all other manner of impressive statistic, is rampant here. For instance, canal tour-boat guides gleefully point out the world's narrowest house (Singel 7)—even though it's something of a cheat, since the house widens out to more sustainable proportions behind its pencil-thin facade—and diamond marketers boast about the world's tiniest diamond (.24mg, cut by Van Moppes). The fact that the Royal Palace sits on exactly 13,659 wooden pilings thrills school kids and tourism officials, as does the knowledge that there are 22 paintings by Rembrandt in town and 206 by Vincent van Gogh—guaranteed tourist draws. I might add that there are probably 1,001 pool tables where you can challenge local sharks. And 9,999 places to sit under one of the city's 220,000 trees and take in the view—of quaint old houses, boats, and tree-lined canals, or of sizzling neon winking meretriciously on Damrak or in the Red-Light District.

You don't have to work hard to enjoy all this. For example, half of the historic buildings have dates engraved on them; exactly 726 of them bear brightly colored plaques called "gablestones" that, before street numbering was introduced by Napoléon, explained pictorially who had the house built and what it was used for—a sailing ship for a sea captain, beer barrels for a brewer, fish for a fisherman, and so forth (but watch out for a growing number of brand-new gablestones masquerading as the real thing—usually the new ones look too pristine, but it's not always easy to tell the difference). The past is easy to read here, and Amsterdam is an open book.

Getting Your Bearings

Attractions are spread fairly evenly throughout the center of town, though the big three museums—Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh, and Stedelijk—are within a few hundred yards of each other in the Museum District in the **Old South** neighborhood, just beyond Singelgracht. So too is the most popular city park, Vondelpark (pronounced "*fon*-dle-park," appropriately, since it's a steamy pickup spot by night). If crowds are what you want, cross Singelgracht and head for **Leidseplein,** a lively square near Vondelpark, or for **Rembrandtplein,** an equally lively square a bit farther east near the Amstel River. Between these lie the three concentric, semicircular 17th-century grand canals of the **Grachtengordel** (Canal Ring)—moving inward, Prinsengracht, Keizersgracht, and Herengracht—where all the canal-house museums are. Cupped within them lies the Singel (not to be confused with Singelgracht), the curving canal that defines the border of the **old city** center—the focal point of which is the tacky, crowded Dam. Between the Dam and Nieuwmarkt, to the east, lies the city's historic **Red-Light District,** usually packed with tourists and gawkers at night.

The **former Jewish Quarter,** rich with historical and cultural landmarks, lies south of the Red-Light District, just east of Waterlooplein. Though it has few mainstream draws, the **Jordaan** neighborhood, west of Centraal Station and just beyond the Grachtengordel, is an atmospheric part of town for a stroll, a bike ride, or a game of pool at a brown cafe. Ditto the **Westerdok** and **Western islands,** up-and-coming areas to the west with a Greenwich Village feel. To the east is the **Java-Borneo island development,** with daringly eclectic architecture. The Amstel River cuts across the city's canals from the southeast; a complicated series of locks feeds water from the Amstel into the canals. The **IJ** (pronounced *Ay*) used to be a bay in a sea called the

Zuiderzee (just to confuse you, the sea's now called the IJsselmeer), but over the centuries has been dammed, harnessed, dredged, and turned into a wide channel. Maps rarely seem to indicate street numbers, and if you set out from Centraal Station to, say, Prinsengracht, looking for number 400, you can walk for several miles if you start on the wrong end. Just remember that house numbers always start from the west and run counterclockwise on the concentric, semicircular canals (the Grachtengordel). For example, if you step out of the train station, turn right, and walk to the canal ring, you'll find number 1. On radial arteries, numbers begin at Centraal Station and increase as you move away from the center of town.

King of the Culture Vultures

"My guides are interesting people, not faceless tour operators," says René Dessing, a suave, bespectacled art historian–turned–tour operator. "And please stop calling me a vulture!" If you're finicky about your culture, Dessing is the man to go to for everything from architectural walks to painting classes on canal boats, restaurant or cafe tours, hotel bookings, and private dining in canal mansions. Dessing's multilingual freelance guides—trained art historians—can get you into private collections, the Royal Palace (even when it's closed to the public), and almost anywhere else you want. Trips to clog-makers or tulip fields—though heavily discouraged—are given a highbrow spin. Some clients wind up spending half their day in a cozy brown cafe. "The idea," says Dessing, "is to make new friends." His company, Artifex Travel, Herengracht 342, (tel 020/620-8112; www.artifex-travel.nl), can plan your entire trip to Amsterdam, from airfare on.

The City of the 7,000 Gables

Before Napoléon imposed a rational numbering system on Amsterdam, gablestones indicated who owned the building and what went on there. Walls in the Begijnhof and on Sint-Luciënsteeg at the Amsterdam Historical Museum have some good gablestones, including the oldest known stone, from 1603, showing a milkmaid balancing her buckets. That goes partway to explaining why most of Amsterdam's 7,000 landmark buildings have gables. Gables also hide the pitched roofs (plain, boring, old sloping roofs that the gables ornament like the false fronts of town centers in the American Old West did) and demonstrate the architect's vertical showmanship in a city where tax laws encouraged thin buildings. If you can pick out Amsterdam's various gable styles without developing Sistine Chapel Neck Syndrome, you can

date the buildings fairly accurately. The neck gable, for example (about 1660–1790), looks like a headless neck, with curlicues on the shoulders—see the first one at Herengracht 168 (the Netherlands Theater Institute), a 1638 mansion. The earliest is the wooden, triangular gable (circa 1250–1550). Only two remain—in the Begijnhof and at Zeedijk 1.

The Lowdown

Where the tourists go... One of Amsterdam's prime industries is tourism—more than 17 million visitors swim through in a good year, most of them in spring and summer. As in Venice, many stick to well-trod canals and gathering places in the small historic center of town. Unlike many other Europeans, most Amsterdammers actually seem to enjoy their company, which cranks up the energy level of the tourist areas even more. Authentic touristy Amsterdam can be a supremely kitschy experience—don't skip it entirely. Most visitors' first experience of Amsterdam is a stroll from Centraal Station down Damrak, a living Pop Art installation with fast-food eateries, souvenir shops, and bumper-to-bumper traffic. At its end is the **Dam,** the historic heart of town overlooked by the gaudy **Koninklijk Paleis (Royal Palace).** Today the area is noisy, tacky, and a prime spot for pickpockets, so stay alert, but the view from the Dam back up Damrak is an unforgettable 21st-century cityscape (no skyscrapers, but lots of neon, tacky stores, and tacky storefronts).

If you're allergic to crowds and noise, avoid the L-shaped **Leidseplein** and its surroundings on the southwest side of town (not far from the Rijksmuseum). In summer, swarms of trinket hawkers and street musicians besiege Leidseplein's chaotic sidewalk cafes. **Rembrandtplein,** south of the Red-Light District, is a handsome, though frowzy, square ringed by a mix of cafes, touristy restaurants, and sleazy coffee shops frequented by dope smokers and lager louts. While most of Rembrandtplein's cafes cater to the theme-park crowd, a few attract hip locals (De Kroon—see p. 88) or serve as hangout spots for the literati (Cafe Schiller—see p. 38). Other tourist magnets are the dozen or so big diamond factories scattered throughout town, especially **Van Moppes** (sparkling with busloads of gawkers who've seemingly never seen a real gemstone; see p. 180)

and the no-longer-brewing-but-still-serving (the beer there is shipped in from its suburban brewery) **Heineken Experience,** where a certain brewing corporation charges for a no-holds-barred marketing presentation.

When the tour buses from Germany roll in, it's Oktoberfest on the Amstel. **Holland Experience** is the kind of "multidimensional film and theater show" (their words) that draws the coach crowds, couch potatoes, tulip-and-clog lovers, and their bawling brats. Here's how the tourist office's monthly newsletter describes the show: "Seated on a moving platform, in the comfort of an aircraft seat, come with us on a trip through the many different faces of Holland. It's all there, the waterland, the agricultural areas, all the tourist-sites, the culture and even the high-tech industry." Gee, maybe we could just buy the video and save on airfare? The **NEMO** science and technology center is a cut above, mobbed by virtual-reality fiends and their nerdy offspring, who want to forget Amsterdam and become a mechanic, doctor, ballet dancer, explorer....

Don't believe the brochures... The must-see sights in Amsterdam are not as advertised—most of them come with disclaimers. The celebrated **"Skinny" Bridge** isn't skinny; the **Heineken Experience "brewery"** stopped brewing beer in 1988; most of the **Bloemenmarkt** "floating" **flower market** doesn't float; Queen Beatrix and Prince Claus don't live in the **Royal Palace** (see "Lifestyles of the rich and deceased" on p. 119); and some of van Gogh's best work is in New York and Paris, not the **Van Gogh Museum** (see "For culture vultures," below). That doesn't mean these sights aren't appealing, though. The Skinny Bridge is broad but handsome; the Heineken Brewery is swell for beer guzzlers; the sidewalk flower market is gorgeous; the Royal Palace is appropriately palatial; and the Van Gogh Museum is heaven for van Gogh fanatics.

The most quintessentially Dutch nonattraction in town is the **Skinny Bridge** (**Magere Brug**—on the Amstel River at Kerkstraat). It's the same kind of white drawbridge van Gogh (and a thousand others) painted as emblematic of Holland. Here's the doubtful tale: Two rich sisters named Mager, living on opposite sides of the Amstel at Kerkstraat, had the bridge built in 1672 so they could visit each other with ease. Well, maybe, but the original bridge—which was authentically narrow—more likely got

its name from the Dutch word for skinny *(mager)*. At any rate, it was replaced with this overfed one in the 18th century, but the brochure writers haven't heard about it yet.

The Heineken Brewery brewed its last lager in 1988, but the name hasn't been changed to "museum" yet—instead, welcome to the **Heineken Experience.** If you take a tour and are disappointed to learn that the beer you are offered after visiting the antique vats is brewed in the suburbs, well—let the boozer beware. Don't forget that for centuries Amsterdammers couldn't drink the local water, and brewing it into beer was simply a sanitary precaution. (Tap water is still called *gemeente pils*—"municipal beer.")

How about the "oldest house in Amsterdam?" The brochures say it's in the **Begijnhof,** and indeed there is a wooden house there, dated 1475, but it was taken down from its original location and moved there and totally rebuilt. So I suppose the accuracy of that one all depends on how you define "old." At **Zeedijk 1** you'll find a similar wooden house, from about 1550. Though heavily remodeled, at least it wasn't moved and you won't find it anywhere in the brochures. As to the "narrowest house in the world," the local misinformation bureau claims it is **Singel 7,** not far from Centraal Station. It looks like it's just over .9m (3 ft.) wide, but actually only the front door is narrow; the house, built on an irregular lot, widens behind it. The house at **Oude Hoogstraat 22** is wider—2m (6.56 ft.)—but it's small all the way back, running only 6m (19.68 ft.) deep. This makes it, according to the Amsterdam tourist office, the narrowest house in Europe, at least—no cheating. And as for the "floating" **flower market (Bloemenmarkt),** well, for the real thing you'll have to go to Bangkok, which has a real floating market, on boats and rafts. Amsterdam's market is on the sidewalk of Singel; some of the shops are built on piers, a few on rusting, permanently moored barges. But at least you can get everything from apricot trees to zinnias here, including marijuana seeds and starter kits, but the only things you'll be able to take home—if you live in America—are phytosanitary-certified bulbs (see the Shopping chapter).

For culture vultures... Culture vultures and coach tourists alike seem to think the **Rijksmuseum** is synonymous with Amsterdam; they simply must see Rembrandt's *Nightwatch.* Luckily, the painting is larger than the Louvre's embattled *Mona Lisa,* so you stand a better

chance of seeing it over hundreds of heads. But don't get too close: A security guard hovers nearby. If you're lucky enough to view it in silence, this painting will take possession of you: Irresistibly, one face after another in the Civic Guards company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch draws your eye in. ***Note:*** Most of the Rijksmuseum is closed for renovation for a whopping 5 years, from late 2003 to mid 2008. During this period, key paintings from the 17th-century Dutch Golden Age collection can be viewed in the museum's own Philips Wing. Other elements of the collection will be on view at other venues in the city.

No one in Holland would touch van Gogh's wild, tortured paintings when he was alive, but the **Van Gogh Museum** is now a national treasure. The painter's tragic life and times are traced from rural Dutch roots in Nuenen, via Paris, Arles, the asylum of St.-Remy (he'd snipped off part of his ear), to suicide at age 37 in Auvers-sur-Oise. Among the 200 or so van Gogh oils in the permanent collection are *The Potato Eaters, Sunflowers,* and *Wheatfield with Crows.* You can also see letters written between Vincent and his brother Theo; hundreds of sketches, drawings, and watercolors; as well as paintings by van Gogh contemporaries Emile Bernard, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Monticelli, and Koning. The collection is housed in a rather aggressively minimalistic, concrete building designed by Gerrit Rietveld in his senescence and opened (after he died) in 1973. The museum's new wing (added in 1999) is a jumble of rounds and rectangles that appears to land on the Museum District, a flying saucer poised on a cracker box. Unfortunately, almost since it opened it's been ringed by metal fencing to keep graffiti aficionados and stray dogs at bay. Inside, huge windows catch the city's rarefied light. The building's relentlessly sculptural shapes provide a challenging venue for temporary van Gogh–related exhibitions. Be prepared for crowds in high season.

One of the world's great modern-art collections is at the **Stedelijk Museum (Municipal Museum),** a refreshing break after acres of van Gogh or Dutch masters. So vast are the holdings—works from the sublime (Malevich's *Suprematism*) to the ridiculous (Koons' *Ushering in Banality*)—that you'll never see the museum hung in the same way twice. Post–World War II art is the strongest suit, but thin samplings from 1850 through the present are

within the museum's scope, including Manet, Monet, Cézanne, Picasso, and Chagall on the prewar timeline. Abstract and De Stijl practitioners Malevich, Mondrian, and Kandinsky are well represented, as are Expressionists like Kirchner, Polke, and Dix. There are also works you'll never see elsewhere by CoBrA (Copenhagen/Brussels/Amsterdam) group painter Karel Appel—he decorated parts of the museum, including the Appelbar and former cafeteria.

Picture perfect... Inaugurated in 1999, **Huis Marseille** is the city's top international photography venue, a nonprofit foundation based in a stunning 1665 canal-house mansion (called Marseille House by the French merchant who built it). Vast display rooms on four floors showcase rotating exhibitions. Even if you're not a shutterbug, the house alone is worth the visit.

Courting privacy... Hidden between center-city blocks, and especially in the Jordaan, are scores of courtyard housing complexes called *hofjes*. Built as almshouses for pious lay sisters, widows, the elderly, and the disabled, they were the "projects" of their day, underwritten by religious orders or, more commonly, wealthy merchants embarrassed by their riches. Most have become normal apartment complexes now, with a common courtyard and stairwells that you can poke around in, as long as you enter and leave quietly. The biggest, most spectacular, and most visited is the **Begijnhof,** just off Spui (there's no number, but the name is chiseled above the door). Built in the 14th century around an oblong courtyard, this complex of buildings housed devout (sometimes fallen, and often poor) women who couldn't quite convince themselves to take religious vows, but wanted to be left in pious peace. All of the original houses are gone (they were rebuilt in the 17th century and later), and few lay nuns still live here. Nonetheless, the Begijnhof is marvelous, one of the loveliest spots in the city.

Go at off-hours (the door is open 10am–10pm May–Sept, and 10am–5pm the rest of the year), or out of season, and you'll be able to muse among the lawns and flowers and the horse-chestnut trees towering over humpback buildings. Among several churches in the compound, the De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church)—a name that likely wouldn't much please the Scottish Presbyterians

for whom it was built—at number 48, has a remarkable wooden-barrel vaulted ceiling with delicate blue decorations. The church was built in 1392 (and doubtless rebuilt since), has been English-speaking since 1607, and offers a rousing Sunday worship at 10:30am precisely. An extraordinarily discreet Roman Catholic church, at number 29, has a U-shaped balcony and a series of paintings and stained-glass windows showing the bizarre Amsterdam Miracle of the Host. (It is said that on the Tuesday before Palm Sunday in 1345, a dying man living on Kalverstraat sent for a priest to administer last rites. He was given the Host. Later he vomited and a nurse threw the vomit on the fire. The next day they found the Host, unburnt, amid the embers. The priest was called back and took the Host away, but it miraculously returned itself to the house on Kalverstraat, and did so again after being removed a second time.) The houses lining the grassy courtyard are from the 17th and 18th centuries, including the so-called oldest house in Amsterdam, from the late 1400s (it was actually moved here and rebuilt, however).

Ladies with a past... The nuns of the Begijnhof didn't have a monopoly on institutionalized pious living. For further insight into the Dutch mind, keep an eye out for the **Spinhuis** when you're in the neighborhood of the Red-Light District. This 1597 landmark was long used as a women's penitentiary and labor camp, where the unlucky ladies generated considerable income for the managers of the establishment. The women doubled as wool spinners and Scarlet Letter–style performers—upright citizens actually paid an admission price to watch the sinners at work. A plaque over the door reads: "Don't cry, I take no vengeance for wrongdoing, but force you to be good. Stern is my hand, kind is my heart." I'll bet. The building is no longer open to the public, but the nearby neighborhood is full of places where you can pay to engage women plying another trade.

Looking down on it all... Amsterdam is flat as a *pannekoek* (pancake) and has no skyscrapers. The best way to get a perspective is to scale the various church towers in town (call ahead to make sure they're open—admissions policies are variable). The highest, and most spectacular, is **Westertoren,** that leaning, 78m (255.84 ft.) Golden Age

masterpiece. You'll be panting by the time you reach its imperial crown, the only thing between you and heaven. Below are the roofs, canals, and spreading trees of the Grachtengordel and Jordaan. On a clear day you can see the whole of old Amsterdam. Southeast, just beyond the Red-Light District, is the lower **Zuidertoren,** from which you see the medieval section of town, from the alleys and narrow canals around Oudezijds Voorburgwal to the Amstel River. In the center of the Red-Light District, the onion-domed, 16th-century bell tower of the **Oude Kerk** rears its head. From it, you'll see the twinkle of the neon lights of Sodom and Gomorrah, with particularly detailed, bird's-eye views into the transvestite/prostitutes' area just north of the church. Get another perspective altogether from the top-floor, panoramic cafe of **Metz & Co.,** an upscale department store at the junction of swank Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat, where you can spy on the canal-house mansions of Grachtengordel millionaires. The city's newest tower, in the Kalvertoren shopping mall, rises to a staggering 30m (98.4 ft.) and is located in the center of the tacky Kalverstraat shopping district. Among my favorite views is from the **Beurs van Berlage** tower, a tough climb but worth it for the aerial perspective of the Red-Light District and Damrak. The roof of **NEMO,** in the harbor, offers a great waterfront panorama, as do the showrooms and bug-box cafe-restaurant at **Pakhuis Amsterdam,** a reconverted Eastern Docklands warehouse now used as an interior design center.

Lifestyles of the rich and deceased... Amsterdam, unburnt since the 15th century and largely spared by world wars and real estate speculators, is rich with historic buildings, particularly 17th-century landmarks that express the parvenu tastes of Dutch merchants of the Golden Age. The vast, imposing (and ugly) **Royal Palace** on the Dam is the queen mother of them all. "Piling it on" is the operative phrase: Schoolchildren know it was built in 1648 by Jacob van Campen to replace an earlier city hall and sits on precisely 13,659 wooden pilings (take 365, as in the number of days in a year; add a "1" in front and a "9" afterward...). It's been the royal palace since 1808, but of course the royal family no longer lives here. In the 17th century, this was the zenith of nouveau riche taste—witness the acres of white-marble floors and staircases and the colossal proportions.

Stride across the Citizen's Hall and you cross heaven and earth: It's paved with inlaid marble and bronze maps of the hemispheres formerly under Holland's control.

Less ostentatious but far more instrumental in Amsterdam's ascension is the **Oost Indisch Huis (East India House),** a currently politically incorrect totem of Dutch colonialism, close to what's now the Red-Light District (Oude Hoogstraat at Kloveniersburgwal). For centuries, starting in 1603, it was the headquarters of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (United East India Company)—the V.O.C.—a mighty trading company that maintained its own army and navy and brought to heel Indonesia, Ceylon, and other Asian countries. You technically can't enter this late-1500s landmark (because the University of Amsterdam has offices in it)—actually, though, you can, just by acting like a student or a professor and doing your sightseeing surreptitiously—but step into its courtyard and you can almost feel the filthy old lucre holding the bricks together. Around the corner on Kloveniersburgwal are the remarkably wide **Trippenhuis** and remarkably narrow **Klein Trippenhuis** (the **Trip House** and the **Trip Coachman's House;** the big one isn't open to visitors, but the small one, which now houses a fashion boutique, is). The former is one of Amsterdam's most striking statements of Golden Age taste. It was built in the neoclassical style between 1660 and 1664 for the Trip brothers, Hendrick and Louis, fabulously rich arms manufacturers who had their chimneys sculpted like cannons and their Corinthian colonnade decorated with a gun. Right across the canal is the .9m- (3 ft.-) wide servants' house built to shut up the Trips' upstart coachman—envious of his masters' double-wide, he said he'd be glad to have a place as wide as the mansion's front door. (Guess what he got.)

Another significant neoclassical mansion from that era is **De Pinto House,** now a public library in the former Jewish Quarter. Isaac de Pinto, co-founder of the United East India Company, was one of the Portuguese Jewish community's leading lights. He bought this house in 1651 and spent a fortune remodeling it in the Italian Renaissance style (100 years after it had gone out of fashion in Italy). Only some painted ceilings and paneling have survived, but it's enough to show that ostentation and glitz were not first invented in the late 20th century.

Many of Amsterdam's Golden Age landmarks are the work of Hendrick de Keyser (1565–1621), who, as the city's official architect during the early 1600s, was largely responsible for the design of the Grachtengordel grand canals. **Bartolotti House,** built in 1618 north of the Golden Bend on Herengracht, is one of de Keyser's most ambitious mansions. Wide, tall, ornate, and distinctly red, it was commissioned by a rich brewer and banker, a Mr. Van den Heuvel, who, to satisfy his mother-in-law, changed his name to Bartolotti. You can visit a series of sumptuous rooms via the next-door **Netherlands Theater Institute Museum,** itself a 1638 canal house, built by Philips Vingboons and remarkable for having the city's first "neck gable." Look up to see its ceilings painted with mythological scenes by Jacob de Wit in 1729. The place was restored top to bottom in 1999, and its formal Renaissance gardens are now open to humble visitors. The so-called **House with the Heads** is not a pothead's crash pad—it's a 1624 de Keyser mansion, one canal over at Keizersgracht 121. Its name comes from the row of six huge classical heads across the facade, representing Diana, Bacchus, Athena, Mars, Ceres, and Apollo.

Okay, if you've gotta see windmills... Once upon a time, when Amsterdammers clomped around in clogs, there were hundreds of windmills right in town. Now there are only half a dozen, two of which are worth visiting. The **De Gooyer Windmill,** a former corn mill built in 1725, still towers over the Nieuwevaart canal northeast of Artis Zoo. In it is Bierbrouwerij't IJ (see p. 149), a terrific microbrewery. A century older, but a total rebuild job, is the thatched **De Rieker Windmill,** moved to a site way out on the banks of the Amstel River at Amstelpark. Now an elegant private house, it was originally built to drain the Rieker polder, a tract of low, reclaimed land a few miles south of Amsterdam. You've doubtless seen this mill in all those Rembrandt paintings and engravings you know by heart; just to make sure you don't miss the connection, there's a statue here of Rembrandt at work.

For history buffs... Spend a few days soaking up the city's atmosphere before exploring the totally rejiggered and immensely improved **Amsterdam Historical Museum,** so you can properly appreciate the hundreds of new displays

ranging from antique delftware to bits of demolished houses (carved beam consoles, gablestones, etc.), from medieval sculptures to a re-created smoking coffee shop and an entire Amsterdam brown cafe (with a fascinating interview on tape of the cafe's last owner, a piss-and-vinegar dame). The museum building itself is intriguing; it started life as an orphanage in the Middle Ages and was rebuilt around cloistered courtyards in the 17th century. There's a mesmerizing computerized map that shows how the Golden Age boomtown doubled and trebled in size in a matter of decades. Rembrandt's gruesome *The Anatomy Lecture* now hangs here. The immense **Maritime Museum,** housed in the 1655 Admiralty Building in the Eastern Docklands, has rooms so huge that full-sized boats have been lugged into them—dig the dazzlingly kitschy royal barge, so encrusted with gold it's a miracle it ever floated. On the wharf out front bob several historic ships, including the reconstructed *Amsterdam,* a three-master from 1749 where kids can play pirates with costumed performers, and the brand-new (and gorgeous) clipper ship *Stad Amsterdam* (hey, that's original).

The **Jewish Historical Museum** offers little such lighthearted entertainment. Skillfully set in four former Ashkenazi synagogues from the 17th and 18th centuries, the modern, airy exhibition hall is a serious—though not downbeat—devotion to Jewish history, religion, and culture in the Netherlands, up to and including the Jewish community's near annihilation during the Nazi occupation. Pre–World War II photos of everyday life in the former Jewish district, where the museum sits, are downright mesmerizing. Striking a related note, the nearby **Resistance Museum** takes you back in time to the dark days of World War II in Holland, during the Nazi occupation (1940–45). Using authentic photographs, documents, weapons, communications equipment, spy gadgets, and other materials actually used by the Dutch Resistance, the exhibits show the ingenuity the freedom fighters brought to bear—along with raw courage—on the German occupation forces. The fate of Amsterdam's Jewish community has a prominent place, as do the actions of workers who in 1941 went on strike to protest the first deportation of 400 Jewish Amsterdammers. Yet the museum doesn't shrink from less-palatable aspects of Holland's wartime record either, like

the actions of collaborators, including those who joined Dutch Nazi SS units.

Moments in time... First gorge yourself on the Rembrandts at the Rijksmuseum—or at any rate on as many of them as are on exhibit during most of the Rijksmuseum's long-term closure—then head to the **Rembrandt House Museum,** on the edge of Amsterdam's former Jewish district and lavishly restored and expanded in late 1999. The artist's colorful life and times are captured in the house he owned from 1639 to 1658 (a bon vivant, his extravagance bankrupted him, and he died not in this house but in destitution). Poke around its dark, atmospheric rooms (leaded windows, creaky floors). The new Cabinet Room replicates Rembrandt's personal collection of artworks and objects such as Chinese porcelain, bizarre woven baskets, celestial globes, Venetian glass, busts of Roman emperors, weapons, and shells. Some of these turn up in his paintings, making for a highbrow treasure hunt. The glinting high-tech new wing, conceived to display etchings, also hosts temporary exhibitions.

The celebrated **Anne Frank House,** "restored" and expanded with a modern wing, is a Prinsengracht canal house with secret back rooms where the gifted Jewish teenager hid from Nazi occupiers with her family from 1942 to 1944. But there's little in the house except a few snapshots of English royalty and movie stars that Anne had cherished—you'd love to stand here and reflect on the unquenchable love of life that made Anne's diary so great, but fuhgettaboutit. Expect long lines, crowded rooms, and an all-too-commercial boutique at the exit, plus a new cafe-restaurant.

At the **Van Loon Museum,** an imposing 1671 mansion on Keizersgracht, you ring the bell and a curator ushers you straight into the Golden Age. White-haired, affable Maurits van Loon, scion of the family that owns the mansion, may join your tour as you wander down the marble halls admiring the stuccowork and the family portraits. One canal away on Herengracht's Golden Bend is the **Willet-Holthuysen Museum,** in an even bigger mansion, this one built in 1687. Its downstairs kitchen has remarkable antique delft tiles, and Jacob de Wit painted the mezzanine room's rococo ceiling. There are also d'Aubusson

tapestries, family portraits, and countless intriguing knick-knacks. The **Amstelkring Museum,** known in English as "Our Lord in the Attic," was built in 1663 into the upper floors of three canal and back houses in an era when Roman Catholics were forced to worship in secret. Navigate the maze of stairways to stumble onto a startlingly beautiful chapel, and a Golden Age kitchen, bednook, and dining room.

Sacred sights... Across the Dam from the Royal Palace is the **Nieuwe Kerk (New Church),** which is in fact one of the oldest churches in town. (It was new when it was built—6 centuries ago—and I guess they just never thought to change the name afterward....) When Golden Age architect Jacob van Campen wasn't gilding the lilies at the Royal Palace, he turned his hand to this Protestant monument to faith, which now works efficiently as both a church and exhibition space. (The Dutch never let sacredness get in the way of a good real estate deal.) The wooden pulpit—about 11m (36.08 ft.) tall—must be the most elaborate outside Italy, with hundreds of figures, and angels sliding down the banister (it took Albert Janszoon Vinckernbrinck 19 years, 1645–1664, to carve it). Beatrix was inaugurated as queen here in 1980; her mother, Juliana, in 1948; and so forth down the centuries. In 2002 Prince Willem Alexander and his bride Máxima tied the knot here. Where there's a New Church that's really old, there must be an old church that's even older. **Oude Kerk (Old Church)** is as old as Amsterdam, and must have been built right after the first dam and the first tavern. We're talking about the early 13th century, though most of the building dates from the 14th to the 16th centuries. Your sense of religious awe may be somewhat spoiled by the ticket booth at the entrance, but no matter. The stained glass and painted wooden ceiling are lovely; the tombstones (Rembrandt's wife Saskia has a memorial stone at number 29K) and choir stalls are masterfully carved; the organ is sonorous and grand. The church is all but surrounded by the tiny red-fringed rooms of the Red-Light District, where the adepts of an entirely different rite keep busy at all hours.

Prominent Golden Age architect Hendrick de Keyser built the **Zuiderkerk** and **Zuidertoren** (**Southern Church** and **Southern Tower**), and when he died in 1621 he was

buried here. Built from 1602 to 1611 on the edge of the former Jewish district, it's among the earliest churches erected specifically for a Calvinist congregation and has one of the finest carillons (played each Thursday at noon) in town. Climb the tower for a panorama of Old Amsterdam. Arguably, de Keyser's masterpiece is the **Westerkerk (Western Church)** and its **bell tower,** the **Westertoren,** which he found time to design the year before he died. The 78m (255.84 ft.) tower, topped with Maximilian of Austria's rather obscenely plump imperial crown, leans forward over Prinsengracht, providing see-forever views. Records show that Rembrandt was buried in 1669 in an unmarked rental grave somewhere in or around the church, and the whereabouts of his bones is still hotly debated. In the heart of the former Jewish Quarter, the 1675 **Portuguese Synagogue,** long the world's biggest synagogue, proves how wealthy the Sephardic Jewish community here was, having helped Amsterdam to become Europe's richest city during the Golden Age. Despite savagery during the Nazi occupation, its tall, elegant windows, 12 marble columns, and giant brass chandeliers have survived intact.

Turrets syndrome... Though Golden Age Amsterdam burst outward beyond its medieval boundaries, a handful of landmarks still standing define the old city's outer limits. You can visit two of them, and stroll by others, to reconstruct a view of Old Amsterdam. The Red-Light District's eastern boundary is Nieuwmarkt, an oblong square in whose center stands **De Waag (The Weigh House),** originally the Sint-Antoniespoort city gate, built in 1487 (now a trendy restaurant and cafe—see the Dining & Cafes chapter). Bristling with seven mismatched turrets, the fearsome fortress was rebuilt in the early 1600s as a public weighing house, with trade guilds housed on the upper floors. Another tower built in the seaward walls in 1487, on what is now Prins Hendrikkade at Geldersekade, near Centraal Station, is where sailors' wives would come to see their husbands off. That's how it got its name, the Schreierstoren (The Tower of Tears), and a 1569 gablestone shows just such a sobbing wife. In 1609, Henry Hudson embarked from here on a misguided adventure that resulted in the founding of New Amsterdam (New

York). This tower, too, now houses a cozy and traditional bar/cafe.

Just down the quay from the Schreierstoren is a relic of a much later era, the 1912–16 Scheepvaarthuis (Shipping Building; Prins Hendrikkade 108). This magnificent, turreted fantasy (not open to the public), crawling with bas-reliefs recounting the city's naval history, houses Amsterdam's port authority administrative offices. It is the inspired work of Amsterdam School architects Michel de Klerk, Pieter L. Kramer, and J. M. van der Mey and stands as a monument to Amsterdam School architecture. A few hundred yards east, overlooking the Oude Schans canal, is the Montelbaanstoren (Oude Schans at Waals Eilandsgracht; not open to the public), a fortified, tilting tower from 1512 that protected what was the city's main shipyard. By now you'll recognize the tiered crown, added in 1606, as the work of the ubiquitous Hendrick de Keyser. At Muntplein, at the juncture of Singel and Rokin, the Munttoren, another piece (the base of the tower, from 1487, which used to be part of the Reguliers Gate) of the city walls (not open to the public), was transformed by de Keyser in 1620, who topped it with one of his signature crowns. Amsterdam was forced to mint its own money here during a war with France and England in 1672, and the name De Munt has been used ever since for this part of town.

Biking on the Water

A suggested tour by water bike: Start at the Canal Bikes mooring on Prinsengracht (at Westermarkt). Pedal south along Prinsengracht, past Lauriergracht, Looiersgracht, and Passeerdersgracht, maybe diverting into one or more of these quiet side canals if you fancy. At Leidsegracht, go straight ahead under the Leidsestraat bridge until you come to Spiegelgracht, where you turn right. Continue to the end, then left under the bridge into Lijnbaansgracht.

Turn right at the first corner into a narrow connecting canal that merges with Singelgracht in front of the Rijksmuseum. Go right along this canal, which is bordered by overhanging trees and the back gardens of waterside villas. You pass the Holland Casino Amsterdam, Leidseplein, and the American Hotel.

Keep going, past the Bellevue Theater and the De la Mar Theater, and turn right into Leidsegracht, which brings you back to Prinsengracht and the long home stretch back to Westermarkt.

Catching the Museum Boat

Ever resourceful and ever aware of the transportation resource their canals represent, Amsterdammers have introduced the ***Museumboot (Museum Boat),*** *Stationsplein 8 (tel* ***020/530-1090****), to carry weary tourists on their pilgrimages from museum to museum. It's an easy way to travel and, for those with limited time, provides some of the advantages of a canal-boat cruise. Boats depart every 30 minutes (every 45 min. in winter) daily from 10am to 5pm from Prins Hendrikkade, in front of Centraal Station (Stop 1), and stop at key spots around the city, providing access to museums and other sights. These are:*

Stop 1 *Centraal Station.*
Stop 2 *Westermarkt: Anne Frankhuis, Theatermuseum.*
Stop 3 *Leidseplein: Vondelpark.*
Stop 4 *Museum Quarter: Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Stedelijk Museum, Vondelpark.*
Stop 5 *Herengracht: Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Bijbels Museum, Flower Market.*
Stop 6 *Waterlooplein: Museum Het Rembrandthuis, Jewish Historical Museum, Artis, Muziektheater, Tropenmuseum.*
Stop 7 *Eastern Dock: Maritime Museum, NEMO.*

The day ticket for the Museum Boat, which includes a discount on museum admissions of up to 50%, is 14€ for adults and 9€ for children ages 4 to 12, and free for children under 4. After 1pm, you can purchase "stop-tickets" from the boatman, the cost of which depends on the number of stops you plan at which you plan to disembark.

Row, row, row your boat... There are more canals here than you'd care to count, and viewing the city from water level shows you a whole different town. The Dutch call pedalos *(waterfiets)* **canal bikes;** no local would be caught dead using one, but who cares? Rent one and splash across the murky brown water to your favorite sights (see the Getting Outside chapter for more details). **Cruises,** in special low and narrow boats built to get under bridges and navigate turns, are the conventional way to go, and make you feel like a bona fide tourist. They run day and night, and even offer lunch, dinner, and wine-and-cheese packages. For the full ultratouristy effect, take one in combination with a diamond workshop or Heineken Brewery tour. The **Museumboot** is a cut above. The tour groups don't usually use it, and the high-tone name puts some people off—after all, not everyone who visits Amsterdam is interested in its museums. You may prefer to just jump on and

off of trams instead, but if you don't, this boat can save you a lot of time, and if you think of it as saving you from needing to take and pay for a canal cruise, it's probably a money saver. The Museumboot offers hop-on, hop-off service all day, just like the more generically named **Canal Bus,** except that you also get negligible reductions on museum entry fees. The **Monne de Miranda, Aquadam,** and **Rederij De Nederlanden** companies are the posh way to cruise around—and cost a small fortune. You'll get a gorgeous antique boat with a liquor cabinet, a captain and hostesses in snazzy uniforms, and privacy.

Diamonds in the rough... Diamond-polishing workshops are an Amsterdam specialty, and though the city isn't on a par with Antwerp, New York, or Tel Aviv, it does have a centuries-old tradition in the trade. Paradoxically, the tours (nearly always free, available daily) are better taken in groups; most operators act like it's a bother to explain to individual visitors the process of extracting, studying, cutting, and evaluating these mesmerizing rocks. There are two dozen workshops around town; if you're going to buy a sparkler at the end of the tour—the object of the exercise for your hosts—you should probably stick to the biggies, who have a reputation to uphold. Their tours are pretty much interchangeable, though Gassan, in the old Jewish district, is particularly, well, polished. Van Moppes Diamonds is probably the biggest of them all, and draws the busloads; glitzy Coster Diamonds is also firmly on the package-tour route (the Tourist Tram—see listing later in the chapter—stops there). Stoeltie Diamonds is smaller but reliable, and the tours are particularly informative. The Amsterdam Diamond Center seems like a sales outlet (and Rolex repair shop), but you can still view workers turning roughs into brilliants within striking distance of the cash register. (See the Shopping chapter for details on all five dealers.)

Sex, drugs, and torture museums... Keen on the seamy, steamy side of town? The **Sex Museum,** on suitably sleazy Damrak, and the interchangeable **Erotic Museum** in the heart of the Red-Light District, are favorites for guys and gals—straight and gay—who get off on rental flesh, porn videos, live sex on stage, S&M, and so forth. You might

recognize the guy with the raincoat from your local porno cinema. Actually, these titillating museums full of dildos and lewd photos of bumping uglies are both rather harmless; you'll see plenty more shocking stuff in the shops, bars, and neon-lit windows of the Red-Light District itself. That is where **The Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum** is found, within stumbling distance of countless smoking coffee shops, prostitutes, and S&M bars for the skintight-jeans set. Lovers of the pungent weed—and anyone curious about its origins and myriad uses—will be fascinated, I'm sure. Softer drug addicts will want to wake up and smell the coffee at the Geels & Co. Coffee and Tea Museum (see the Shopping chapter), also in the Red-Light District. The shop has been around for more than a century, sells great stuff, and has a formidable collection of grinders, roasters, tea canisters, and all sorts of brewing paraphernalia in its small, upstairs museum, open only Saturday afternoons. You have to be something of a masochist to enjoy the **Torture Museum,** a commercial cabinet of horrors on Singel, near the flower market, where eternal adolescents stare slack-jawed at the centuries-old instruments of torture, from the seat of nails and rack to the guillotine and various charming cages. The Amnesty International blurb rightly reminds visitors that torture is still going on today, and gives this grotesquerie a patina of respectability.

Museums that won't bore the kids... Watch your sprout become a mechanic, doctor, ballet dancer, or explorer before your boggled eyes in the **NEMO** science and technology center in the harbor, between Centraal Station and the Maritime Museum. Designed by Renzo Piano (aka Mr. Pompidou Center in Paris), the NEMO may look like a beached supertanker, but it manages to ship kiddies into various unknown worlds of virtual reality (real reality just ain't good enough these days). While your young'uns play pirate at the **Maritime Museum** on the three-masted sailing ship from 1749, you can relax in the panoramic cafeteria (with a nonsmoking area that actually lives up to the name, unlike most in town). Kids go hog-wild over all the real boats on the wharf as well as those indoors (including the royal barge, which drips with gold). There are 500 or so antique scale models of ships, too. Across the Nieuwevaart canal is the **Kromhout Shipyard Museum.** Budding mariners and old salts can see historic vessels being

repaired in this 19th-century working shipyard. Several leaky old tubs are always on hand, and the warehouse is redolent with the fumes of early internal-combustion marine engines, including the celebrated 12-horsepower Kromhout. The place has seen better days, and that's precisely why it's so charming. The **Houseboat Museum** is in a 1914 former cargo barge, the *Hendrika Maria,* transformed decades ago into a houseboat, and in 1997 into a house museum. Devised to teach kids 6 to 12 about other cultures, the **Kindermuseum TM Junior** (the children's section of the **Tropenmuseum [Tropical Museum]**) is really a fairly adult affair. Youngsters seem perfectly capable of appreciating instead the fascinating, grown-up ethnographic exhibits—reconstructed African, Indian, or East Asian villages and bazaars, complete with rickshaws—in the main museum, whose primary purpose, in less politically correct days, was to glorify Dutch colonialism.

More kidding around... If you're in town with family, the **Artis Zoo** should be on your list. This is the oldest zoo in

Biking in Amsterdam

What are the rules of the road for biking in Amsterdam? Apparently, there are none. Bikers can go anywhere they want, whenever they want, however they want, and do whatever they want when they get there. Or so you would think from the antics of Amsterdam's massed legions of bikers. They're enough to throw a scare into a bunch of Hell's Angels. Biking is one activity where you should disregard the maxim "When in Amsterdam, do as the Amsterdammers do"—you might easily end up dead, which could spoil your entire vacation.

It takes a while to get used to moving smoothly and safely through the whirl of trams, cars, buses, trucks, fellow bikers, and pedestrians, particularly if you're on a typically ancient and much-battered stadfiets *(city bike), also known as an* omafiets *(grandmother bike)—the only kind that makes economic sense here, since anything fancier will attract a crowd of people wanting to steal it. It's better to develop your street smarts slowly. I know this sounds like wimpish advice—you might have mountain-biked from one end of the Rockies to another for all I know—but remember that not everyone on the* straat *is as sensible as you are.*

The first rule of biking in Amsterdam: Don't argue with trams—they bite back, hard. The second rule: Cross tram lines perpendicularly so your wheels don't get caught in the grooves, which could pitch you out of the saddle. And the third rule: Don't crash into civilians (pedestrians). That's about it. Like everyone else, you'll likely end up making up the rest of the rules as you go along.

the country, founded in 1838, and about 6,000 animals from around the world live in it. The park setting is a bonus, and when they've had their eyeful of zebras, pythons, and orangutans and tire of petting them at the animal farm, kids can stargaze in the planetarium. If that doesn't send everyone back to the hotel for a nap, take them to the tiny **Petting Zoo (Kinderboerderij De Dierencapel)** in the Western Islands neighborhood, where exotic-looking piglets, banal chickens, fragrant goats, and woolly sheep nibble, root, and peck along the banks of the Bickersgracht canal. The Punch 'n' Judy show—called "Pantijn"—at the open market at Noordermarkt (in the Jordaan, bordering Prinsengracht) on Saturday mornings may be in Dutch, but kids will love it anyway, since they'll understand the action. The Waterlooplein flea market (on Waterlooplein) is always entertaining, and you can avoid spending your euros by pointing out that most of the junk isn't worth shipping home to the rumpus room.

The **Tram Museum (Elektrische Museumtramlijn)** is in fact a streetcar ride, but all the better: Kids love it. The museum has several old trolleys and trams once used in other European cities, and they rattle down special tracks from Haarlemmermeerstation through the Amsterdamsebos (a wooded park with tons of family amusements; see the Getting Outside chapter) to suburban Amstelveen and back. The same kind of ride is offered by the **Tourist Tram,** a nifty 1920s streetcar that zips from the top of Damrak all over town. They *might* also like the **Historic Ferry,** an old ferry boat that plies the IJ River to suburban Nieuwendam and back, an old-fashioned attraction strictly for tourists, as it's not a public transportation service: Skip it unless you like old boats and suburban scenery.

People-watching... People-watching on cafe terraces is a *major* activity in Amsterdam. There's a great rush for the best places in good weather. Leidseplein is a prime spot to study the fauna, local and imported, and the Café Américain (see the Dining & Cafes chapter) is the best place for it. There's a terrace outside, where you'll see the square's inevitable fire eaters, clowns, and sidewalk musicians. Over in Vondelpark, at the **Netherlands Film Museum,** hardly anyone seems to go into the resource center for cinematographers. They're all hanging out on the

wide, shaded terraces of the Café Vertigo overlooking the park where people picnic, blade, cycle, and fornicate in plain view. Two postmodern white cafes on the Amstel River, the Café de Jaren and Dantzig (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), have become the ultimate see-and-be-seen venues. Both have riverside terraces; both have big, airy interiors where locals and visitors pose. Over on Damrak—among the winking plastic signs of peep shows and souvenir shops—is the De Roode Leeuw restaurant and cafe (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), with the oldest heated terrace in town, a comfy spot from which to watch dazed tourists and pickpockets in action. Half a mile away, at Spui, the bibliophiles, media types, and fashionable Grachtengordel residents sit on the terrace or crowd onto the sidewalk at Hoppe and Café Luxembourg next door (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), an old brown cafe and a designer newish one, known as Amsterdam's most sophisticated people-watching venues.

Behind the eight ball... About the most action sports locals will go for are beer guzzling and getting snookered at carambole, a devilishly complicated game played on pool tables without pockets. Get them to explain it to you; I can't. Pool-table games are an obsession among the brown cafe contingent, and it's usually easy to pick up a game. Scores of places have tables, but Café Chris (see the Dining & Cafes chapter) in the Jordaan, the oldest brown in town (1624), is a particularly atmospheric, if cramped, spot to chalk a stick with regulars. Ruk & Pluk (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), a crazy joint run by a famous gay couple, is a modern brown cafe east of Oosterpark, with a pocketless table under the Brazilian carnival decor. Serious players should check out the **Bavaria Pool-Snookercentrum,** out on Van Ostadestraat, south of the Singelgracht and not too far from the Heineken Brewery, where sharks bring their own cues and reserve a table on one of four floors. For pickup games, you'd better be good. The rival club, **De Keizer Snooker Club,** on Keizersgracht, near Westerkerk, has individual rooms where titans battle it out on the felt.

Chess cafes... Chess is another local favorite, since chess pieces can be moved with a minimum of effort and allow you to remain within reach of liquid refreshment.

Countless cafes have chess sets for their customers, and anyone can play; a handful, called "*schaak* cafes," are frequented almost exclusively by the *schaak*-obsessed. Gambit is possibly the most competitive, a Jordaan hangout where you have to cut away at the smoke to see what the queen and king are up to. At Schaak Café Het Hok, also near Leidseplein, regulars sit in the fog under Ajax soccer posters, sip tea, and reach for the suspended timers. (See the Dining & Cafes chapter for details on both.)

Where to escape the crowds... There are times when even the most gregarious traveler feels like being alone. You'll find no crowds at the **Trade Union Museum** perusing the yellowed newspaper clippings, warped black-and-white photos, and lengthy documents (in Dutch) recounting the struggle of organized labor in the Netherlands. Sounds like a total yawn—and it is. But lo and behold, the early-1900s Dutch Art Nouveau architecture is stunning stuff, and no one seems to know about it. Hendrik Petrus van Berlage (as in the Beurs van Berlage; see "Art nouveau to go," below) designed the vaulted, tiled building—with stained glass and sculpted bas-reliefs—for the Diamond Workers' Union. Another beautiful building where you'll never be bustled, the quiet **Bijbels Museum,** is a real treat, whether or not you're a religious scholar. It houses rather astounding scale models of biblical archaeology, and the architecture is a revelation: twin 1662 canal houses with an elliptical wooden staircase, and a coffered ceiling with mythological scenes painted in 1717 by Jacob de Wit.

Around the turn of the century, witty Amsterdammers used to quip that if you wanted to meet your mistress in private, the **Willet-Holthuysen Museum** was the place to go. This restored 1687 Golden Bend canal-house museum is still quiet. Polite visitors can peek at the downstairs antique kitchen, the mezzanine room with a rococo, painted ceiling, the d'Aubusson tapestries, and the family portraits of stern ancestors. Probably the quietest museum of them all, though, is dedicated to the memory of 19th-century satirical writer Eduard Douwes-Dekker, aka Multatuli, a legend for the Dutch but largely unknown outside the Netherlands (remember his incomparable *Max Havelaar,* set on a coffee plantation?). Despite international adoption of a "Max Havelaar" logo by fair trade activists (for coffee

grown by fairly paid peasants), utter stillness reigns in the **Multatuli Museum,** where a solicitous (and surprised) curator will explain, in English, about the photos, first-edition books, documents, and old furniture in this one-room memorial. Another pure-Dutch treat, of another kind, is the **Pianola Museum,** surely the most *gezellig* museum in town. Player-piano aficionado Kasper Janse has about three dozen old pianolas in his private collection. There's a front-room brown cafe, where local Jordaaners and rare, lost tourists sip coffee and sing along to old tunes.

Art Nouveau to go... Art nouveau aficionados won't want to miss the **Beurs van Berlage,** formerly the Stock Exchange, now a conference center, art exhibition space, museum, and concert hall. Built in 1896 by architect Hendrik Petrus van Berlage, it's a transition between the heavy, eclectic architecture of the late 1800s and the modernity of the Amsterdam School that followed. The complex covers an entire city block—make sure you go inside to see the best of it (the official guides are Artifex Travel; see p. 112). There are tiled arches and columns, ornate ironwork, stained glass, sinuous lights that seem straight out of a jungle, and a stunning cafe with murals. The tower offers breathtaking views—literally (there's no elevator). Another Dutch Art Nouveau landmark, with Art Deco additions, is the Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American hotel and its Café Américain (Leidsekade 97; see the Dining & Cafes as well as the Accommodations chapters), built in 1900. Its Emerald City–style tower rises over Leidseplein. The cafe's wall clock and the symbolist murals hark back to *Great Gatsby* times. Hanging like bats from the high, vaulted ceiling are huge bronze and stained-glass lamps that look like they might take wing. Another van Berlage treasure is the rarely visited **Trade Union Museum,** near the Artis Zoo in Eastern Central Amsterdam (see "Where to escape the crowds," above).

When you're down to your last euro... An only-in-Amsterdam musical freebie is provided by the oh-so-quaint jingle-bell carillons strategically distributed around the four corners of the oldest part of town. There are actually nine historic carillons (four date from the 17th century), but only four of them ring out classical tunes (and the

occasional pop hit) once a week from the tops of their church towers. Tuesdays, go to the **Westertoren;** Thursdays, the **Zuidertoren;** and Fridays, the Munttoren, all at noon. On Saturdays from 4pm to 5pm it's the **Oude Kerkstoren**'s turn. Even if you can't manage to get right under the towers, the sweet-and-sour melodies turn each neighborhood into a music box. The **Zuiderkerk** has one of the nicest carillons, and also offers a free, permanent exhibition on Amsterdam's development and planning through the centuries, featuring drawings, photographs, slide shows, and scale models. You can see how the city grew and consult new urban planning schemes to see where it's stumbling next.

From October to June, both the **Muziektheater** and the celebrated **Concertgebouw** (see the Entertainment chapter) offer free lunchtime concerts. Head for the **Boekmanzaal** (part of the Muziektheater) for chamber-music performances by the Choir of the Netherlands Opera, the Netherlands Philharmonic, or the Netherlands Ballet Orchestra (times vary—check at the Muziektheater's info desk). The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra kicks in on Wednesdays at the same time with public rehearsals of the works they'll be performing that night. Get to both when the doors open at 12:15pm, or you might not find a seat. De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church) at the **Begijnhof** offers its own lunchtime classical concerts on Tuesdays at 1:10pm, precisely. The Pulitzer Concert, usually held once a year, on the last Saturday in August, features classical music performed on pontoons built in front of the Pulitzer Hotel (see the Accommodations chapter; call the hotel for info).

While water taxis and canal buses can be pricey, there is one way to get onto the water without spending a euro. The city operates a free ferry service from the docks immediately behind Centraal Station to the north bank of the IJ River. It takes only about 5 minutes to get across, and isn't exactly thrilling, but you do get a whiff of the sea and a nice view of bustling river traffic. One ferry, the ***Buiksloterwegveer,*** leaves from pier 7 and operates daily, around the clock. The other, the ***IJ-Veer,*** is smaller, easier to pronounce, leaves from pier 8, and runs weekdays only, from early morning to dinnertime. Whichever one you take, the ferry is the most pleasant way to get to the dull suburb of Amsterdam Noord—and the outdoorsy pleasures

just beyond it. Within 15 minutes on foot or by bike from the ferry terminal, you can explore the centuries-old suburb of Nieuwendam, cycle through the Florapark, or catch the bike and hiking trails leading to nearby villages like Broek in Waterland, Monnickendam, and Zaanse Schans (see the Getting Outside chapter for details). Also leaving pier 8 is the ***IJ-Veer;*** a 20-minute ride takes you to Java Island and its novel architecture, a postmodern mix of Lego and faux Manhattan Beach styles.

Here's a two-in-one: If you don't feel like going into the Amsterdam Historical Museum but are craving some historic art and architecture, stroll through the **Schuttersgalerij,** a passageway linking Kalverstraat to Spui, via the Begijnhof, that famously hidden courtyard (see p. 147). Under the Schuttersgalerij's glass roof, you'll see 15 bigger-is-better, 17th-century paintings showing the city's heroic Civic Guards. These paintings are in the same tradition, if not quite the same league, as Rembrandt's *Nightwatch,* but then you don't have to line up and pay to view them, either. And seen in this relaxed context, without crowds, they are well worth the detour. Lovers of romantic ruins should try the **Rijksmuseum's architectural garden,** open and free during museum hours. Scattered among the fountains and flowerbeds are weatherworn garden statuary and a hodgepodge of columns, gables, festoons, and fragments from monuments and houses destroyed over the last century. It provides a sort of whirlwind tour of Dutch architecture since the Middle Ages and even includes 17th-century city gates from the cities of Deventer and Groningen—despite all of the above, it's invariably empty.

The Red-Light District... To sample the Red-Light District's past and prurience, start at Centraal Station and take busy Prins Hendrikkade east a few hundred yards to the Schreierstoren (The Tower of Tears; see p. 125). Oudezijds Kolk alley leads to the Oudezijds Voorburgwal canal and the **Oude Kerk,** the oldest church in Amsterdam. Climb the onion-dome belfry for views of the Red-Light District; then go inside for the stained glass, carved choir stalls, and painted wooden ceiling. There are gables and gablestones galore up and down this canal and surrounding streets and alleys. One canal east, off

Oudezijds Achterburgwal, walk down Oude Hoogstraat and you'll see narrow Oude Hoogstraat 22, the alleged narrowest house in Europe, measuring only 2m (6.56 ft.) wide and 6m (19.68 ft.) deep. Cross the Waals Eilandsgracht canal, go west toward Centraal Station, and you'll run into the immense Scheepvaarthuis (Shipping Building), a turreted, 1912–16 Amsterdam School fantasy with incredible bas-reliefs (see p. 125).

The old Jewish Quarter... Start a tour of former Jewish Amsterdam at the **De Pinto House** on Sint-Antoniesbreestraat, once home of Isaac de Pinto, a Portuguese Jew who co-founded the United East India Company. Nearby, just off the same street, is Hendrick de Keyser's **Zuiderkerk** and **Zuidertoren,** built from 1602 to 1611 for a Calvinist congregation. Climb the tower for views of the area. A hundred yards southeast, on Joodenbreestraat, is the **Rembrandt House Museum,** where the artist lived from 1639 to 1658. Follow Zwanenburgwal to the Amstel River and you'll come upon the **Jewish Memorial,** a megalith bearing witness to the Nazi atrocities that claimed 75,000 Jewish Amsterdammer lives and led to the destruction of Amsterdam's Jewish district. Loop around the hideous, modern city hall–cum–**Muziektheater,** also known by the derisive nickname "false teeth." (Look at it from the river and you'll see why.) Behind Mr. Visserplein, a busy traffic circle, is the **Jewish Historical Museum;** next door is the enormous 1675 **Portuguese Synagogue.** A few hundred yards farther east is the **Hortus Botanicus**—a gorgeous 17th-century botanical garden. Follow Plantage Middenlaan to the **Hollandsche Schouwburg,** once a turn-of-the-century comedy theater, now a gutted and roofless wreck. This is probably the most moving of Amsterdam's memorials, a site where an estimated 60,000 to 80,000 Jews crossed the threshold (it was used as a processing center for deportees) awaiting transit to Nazi death camps.

***Hofje*-hopping in the Jordaan...** Uncontrolled real estate speculation at the end of the Golden Age gave birth to the Jordaan's eccentric layout, a maze of narrow alleys and canals and tiny, teetering old buildings. Art galleries, hundreds of boutiques, and countless cafes have sprouted up

here now. The most atmospheric section is north of Elandsgracht, and the best scenery of all is on the Bloemgracht, Egelantiersgracht, Brouwersgracht, and Prinsengracht canals. There are several open markets around **Noorderkerk,** a landmark 1623 church. *Hofje*-hopping—exploring the hidden courtyards of former Jordaan almshouses—is one way to discover the neighborhood. Start in the north on Palmgracht (28–38) at the tiny **Raepenhofje,** which is filled with flowers and marked with a gablestone showing a beet. Walk south, then right on Lindengracht (147–165) to the **Suykerhofje,** built in 1667 for Protestant women, with steep tile roofs and dormers and a wonderfully overgrown garden. Around the corner to the south is the **Huyszitten Weduwenhof Karthuizerhof,** on Karthuizerstraat (21–131), a large complex whose 80 houses surround a quad and date to 1650; it was built for widows with children. A big old water pump is home to cats, and there's a brightly painted gablestone of a sailing ship. Continue south to narrow Egelantiersdwarsstraat (26–50) and the **Claes Claeszhofje,** a small double courtyard with an unusual wooden tower, wisteria, and hawthorn. Around the corner on Egelantiersgracht (105–141) is the **Sint-Andrieshofje,** twice the size of the Claes Claeszhofje, with a restored garden that's spectacular in spring. A 15-minute walk south takes you to Elandsgracht (104–142) and the **Hofje Venetia** or **Maarloopshofje,** a large courtyard with a gorgeous garden.

The Grachtengordel mansions... To understand why this neighborhood has come to mean "moneyed" in Dutch, stroll along Herengracht's Golden Bend, between Leidsestraat and Vijzelstraat, with shoulder-to-shoulder mansions. Or, if you have a whole afternoon to tackle the Grachtengordel, start at the top of Prinsengracht, west of Centraal Station, walk along it as far as the Amstel River, then double back on Keizersgracht and Herengracht, weaving between them via Reguliersgracht (lots of bridges, plus handsome Amstelveld square), Nieuwe Spiegelstraat (the antiques dealers' quarter), and the small side streets and canals north of Leidsegracht. At Prinsengracht 85–133 is another former almshouse, the beautifully restored and immensely restful **Van Brienen's Hofje,** from 1804 (also known as De Star after the De Star

Brewery foundation that took over the site in 1841). Merchant Jan van Brienen supposedly had it built in gratitude for his escape from a vault in which he had accidentally been locked. It has a lovely garden and benches where you can rest. At **Zon's Hofje** (157–171), you'll find an intimate, shaded courtyard. The easily recognizable **Westerkerk,** an imposing 1620–38 Protestant church, and its tall, leaning Westertoren tower, are prime examples of architect Hendrick de Keyser's handiwork, and the tower provides a terrific panorama.

Behind it, on Keizersgracht, is the pink-granite **Homomonument,** a 1987 memorial to persecuted gay men and lesbians. Nearby on Keizersgracht (121) is the celebrated **House with the Heads (Huis met de Hoofden),** a 1624 mansion with large, sculpted heads of Diana, Bacchus, Athena, Mars, Ceres, and Apollo. A few blocks down on the same canal (324) is Felix Meritis, an aesthetically challenged neoclassical theater from the 1780s that was long renowned for its acoustics (it's now used for classical musical concerts; see the Entertainment chapter). Five minutes away on the same canal is **Huis Marseille,** a 1665 mansion now housing a photography foundation. A few blocks north on Herengracht (168–170) is the **Netherlands Theater Institute Museum,** a resource center for performance-arts students housed in a remarkable 1638 mansion with the city's first neck gable and ceilings painted by Jacob de Wit. Two ground-floor rooms actually belong to the next-door **Bartolotti House,** a 1618 landmark with an exceptionally ornate redbrick facade.

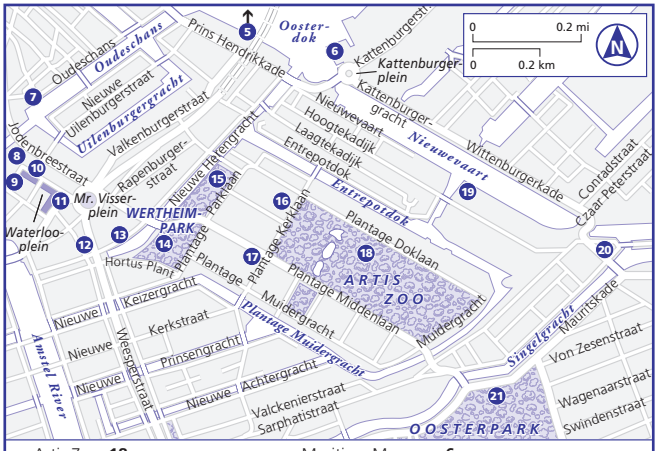
A Singel-minded stroll... The medieval moat Singel—the outermost ring surrounding the city before the Golden Age boom—starts with what is supposed to be the narrowest house in the world **(Singel 7).** A few bridges down is the Torensluis, a 17th-century bridge with a charming downstairs dungeon that was flooded daily, to the horror of "lazy" prisoners who drowned if they didn't pump the water out fast enough. The canal ends with a flourish at the fragrant **flower market,** between Koningsplein and Muntplein.

Haarlem days... It's no coincidence that the distance from Centraal Station to Haarlem (19km/11.78 miles) is about

the same as the distance from the tip of Manhattan to Harlem (which were known in the 17th century as Nieuw Amsterdam and Nieuw Haarlem)—15 minutes on the train (trains run from dawn to midnight). Founded a thousand years ago, the city of Haarlem is older than Amsterdam, and is thoroughly provincial, prosperous, and conservative (meaning there's only a diminutive Red-Light District here). Wander its narrow streets from the Grote Markt main square to the 15th-century Amsterdamse Poort city gates, pretending you've stepped into a Dutch master's painting. One of Haarlem's main draws is the Grote Kerk or Sint-Bavokerk, right on the main square, a 500-year-old Gothic mountain of stone with a 75m (246 ft.) lantern tower visible from miles away. The nave itself has lofty vaults and remarkable wrought-iron grilles and woodwork. Handel, Mozart, Schubert, and Liszt supposedly tickled the keys of its 5,000-pipe Christian Müller rococo organ (you can hear it played on Tues evenings from mid-May to mid-Sept and on Thurs afternoons from April to Oct; tel 023/532-4399 for info), and the Golden Age painter Frans Hals (1580–1666) is buried here.

Hals, the most renowned of the School of Haarlem painters, spent much of his active life in Haarlem; he died in the city's 1608 Oudemannenhuis almshouse, now the biggest attraction in town—the **Frans Hals Museum.** His paintings fill the rooms of handsome, gabled cottages arranged around a main courtyard. Hals earned his reputation as a portraitist and, like Rembrandt, a painter of Civic Guards groups. Somewhat more political than his fellow artists, he made every figure in his group portraits equally intense—that way everyone was satisfied, and each subscriber paid his share of the artist's fee. Among Hals' most famous works of this type is the *Officers of the Saint George Militia Company;* see it here. Also worth a look—if only for the architecture and curious old-fashioned science, technology, and other displays—is the **Teylers Museum,** the country's oldest.

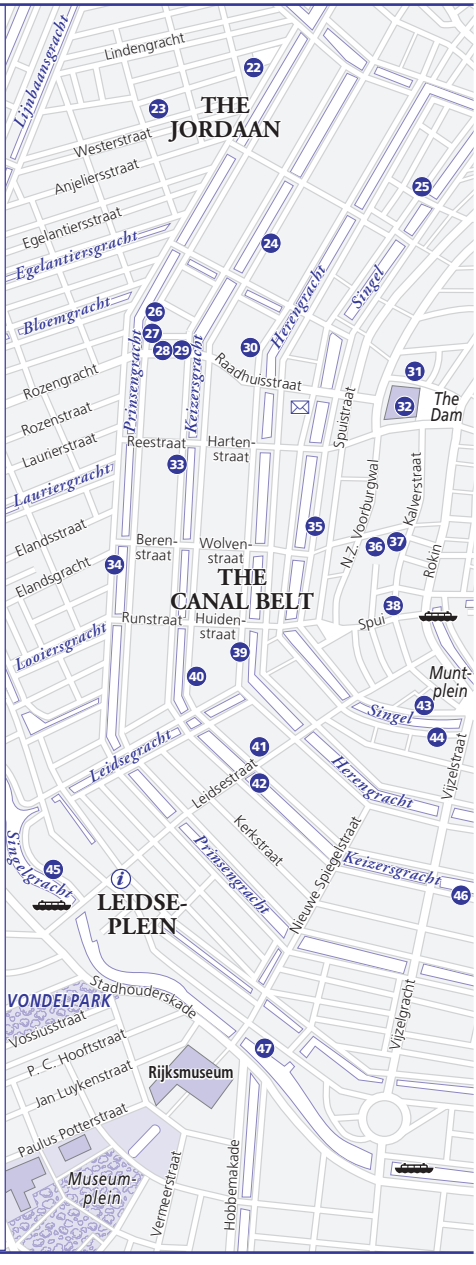
Map 11: Eastern Amsterdam Diversions

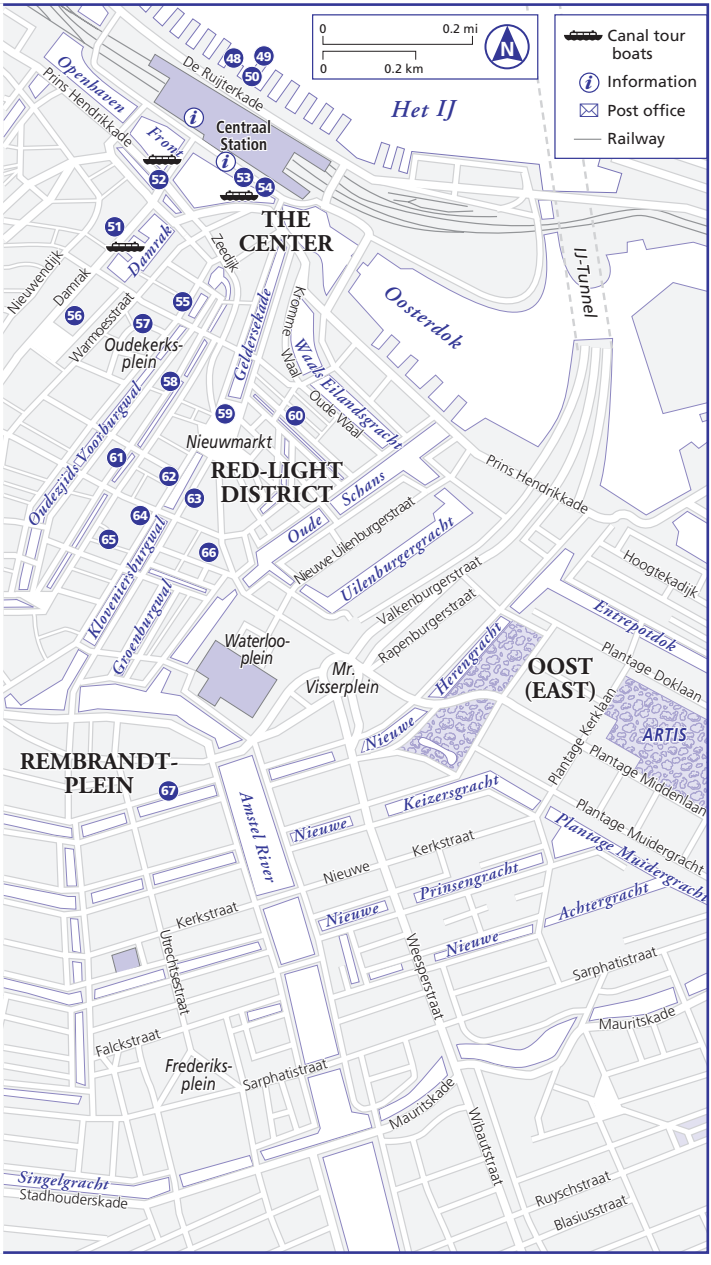


Artis Zoo **18**
De Gooyer Windmill **20**
De Pinto House (Pintohuis) **7**
Holland Experience **10**
Hollandsche Schouwburg **17**
Hortus Botanicus **14**
Jewish Historical Museum **12**
Jewish Memorial **9**
Kromhout Shipyard Museum **19**
Maritime Museum **6**
Muziektheater/Stadhuis **11**
NEMO **5**
Portuguese Synagogue **13**
Rembrandt House Museum **8**
Resistance Museum **16**
Trade Union Museum (De Burcht Vakbondsmuseum) **15**
Tropenmuseum and Kindermuseum (Tropical and Children's museums) **21**

Map 12: Central Amsterdam Diversions

- Amstelkring Museum (Our Lord in the Attic Museum) **55**
- Amsterdam Historical Museum **36**
- Anne Frank House **26**
- Bartolotti House **30**
- Begijnhof **38**
- Beurs van Berlage (Berlage Stock Exchange) **56**
- Bijbels Museum (Biblical Museum) **39**
- Buiksloterwegveer **48**
- Canal Bike **27, 42, 45, 47**
- Canal Bus **53**
- De Keizer Snooker Club (Snooker Club de Keizer) **33**
- De Waag **59**
- East India House (Oost Indisch Huis) **40**
- Erotic Museum **58**
- Flower Market (Bloemenmarkt) **44**
- The Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum **61**
- Historic Ferry **49**
- Homomonument **29**
- House with the Heads (Huis met de Hoofden) **24**
- Houseboat Museum **34**
- Huis Marseille **40**
- IJ-Veer **50**
- Klein Trippenhuis (Trip Coachman's House) **62**
- Metz & Co **41**
- Monne de Miranda **60**
- Multatuli Museum **25**
- Museumboot **54**
- Netherlands Theater Institute Museum **30**
- Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) **31**
- Noorderkerk **22**
- Oude Kerk/Oude Kerkstoren (Old Church and Tower) **57**
- Pianola Museum **23**
- Rederij De Nederlanden **35**
- Royal Palace (Koninklijk Paleis) **32**
- Schuttersgalerij (Civic Guards Gallery) **37**
- Sex Museum **51**
- Spinhuis **65**
- Torture Museum **43**
- Tourist Tram **52**
- Trippenhuis (Trip House) **63**
- Van Loon Museum **46**
- Westerkerk/Westertoren (Western Church and Tower) **28**
- Willet-Holthuysen Museum **67**
- Zuiderkerk/Zuidertoren (South Church and Tower) **66**

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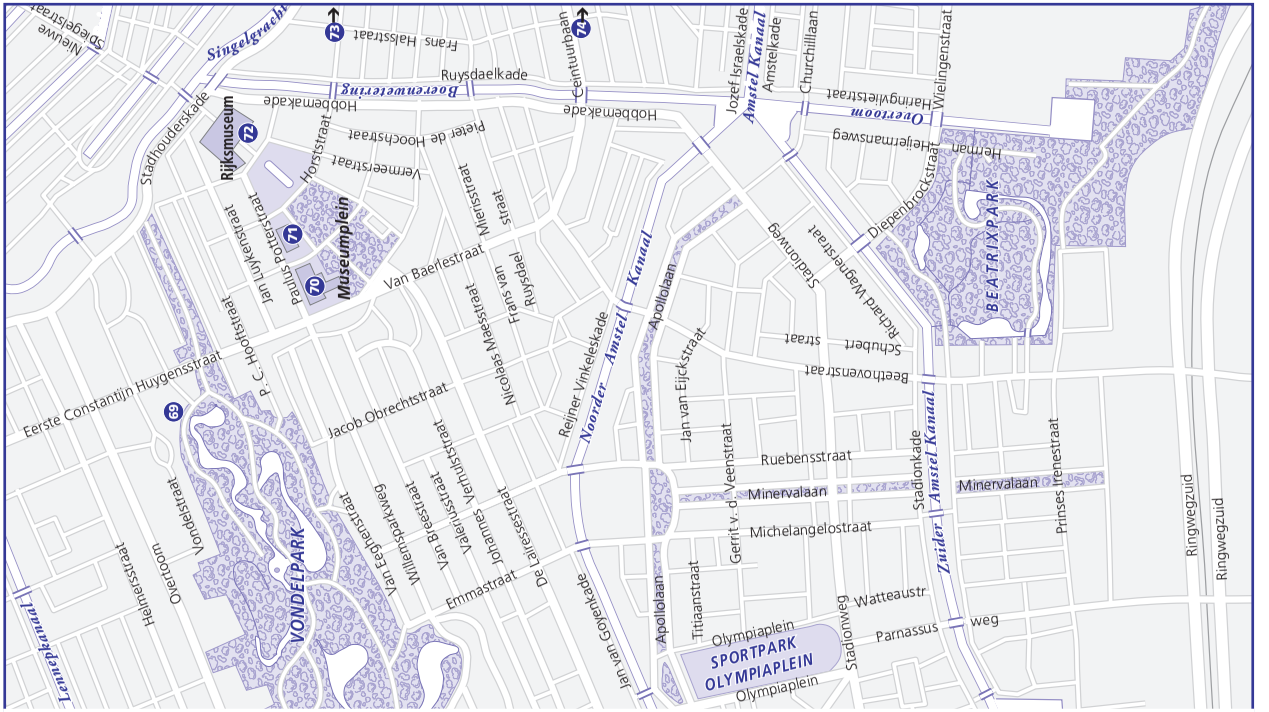
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Prins Hendrikkade
Hoogtekadijk
Entrepotdok
OOST (EAST)
Plantage Doklaan
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
Plantage Muidergracht
ARTIS
Waterloo-plein
Mr. Visserplein
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Amstel River
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
Kerkstraat
Nieuwe
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Wibautstraat
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat
Frederiks-plein
Falckstraat
Utrechtsstraat
Weesperstraat
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Zeedijk
Geldersekade
Oude Schans
Oude Waal
Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat
Uilenburgergracht
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Herengracht
Warmoesstraat
Prins Hendrikkade
De Ruijterkade
Oosterdokskade
Open havenfront
Centraal Station
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67

Map 13: Southern Amsterdam Diversions

- Bavaria Pool-Snookercentrum **74**
- Heineken Experience **73**
- Netherlands Film Museum **69**
- Rijksmuseum **72**
- Stedelijk Museum **70**
- Tram Museum (Elektrische Museumtramlijn) **68**
- Van Gogh Museum **71**

DIVERSIONS


Singelgracht
Frans Halsstraat
Ruysdaelkade
Boerenwetering
Hobbemakade
Stadhouderskade
Rijksmuseum
Horststraat
Pieter de Hoochstraat
Vermeerstraat
Paulus Potterstraat
Jan Luykenstraat
Museumplein
Van Baerlestraat
Ruysdaelstraat
Frans van Mierisstraat
Nicolaes Maesstraat
Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat
C.P. Hoofstraat
Jacob Obrechtstraat
Reijner Vinkeleskade
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Jan van Eijckstraat
Centuurbaan
Jozef Israelskade
Amstelkade
Churchilllaan
Amstel Kanaal
Oosterdoom
Haringvlietstraat
Wielingenstraat
Heiermansweg
Herman Teirlinckstraat
Diepenbrockstraat
Stadionweg
Richard Wagnerstraat
BEATRIXPARK
Schubertstraat
Beethovenstraat
Ruebensstraat
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Stadionkade
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Gerrit v. Veenstraat
Titiaanstraat
Olympiaplein
SPORTPARK OLYMPIAPLEIN
Stadionweg
Watteaustraat
Parnassusweg
Jan van Goyenkade
Emmastraat
De Lairessestraat
Johannes Vermeerstraat
Valeriusstraat
Van Beestestraat
Willemspark
Van Eedenstraat
VONDELPARK
Vondelstraat
Overtoom
Leidsegracht
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat
Helsinkistraat
Leidsegracht

The Index

Amstelkring Museum (Our Lord in the Attic Museum) (p. 124) CENTER This is the city's only surviving clandestine or "attic" Roman Catholic church, a baroque bijou built in 1663 into the upper floors of three houses, now on the edge of the Red-Light District.... *Tel 020/624-6604. www.museumamstelkring.nl. Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40 at Heintje Hoekssteeg. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. Open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, April 30. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 55.

Amsterdam Historical Museum (p. 121) CENTER Housed in a medieval-era orphanage, this is the repository for jewelry, porcelain, maps, and paintings telling the story of Amsterdam from its birth in the 13th century.... *Tel 020/523-1822. www.ahm.nl. Kalverstraat 92, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 359, and Sint-Luciënsteeg 27 (3 entrances). Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Open Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, weekends and holidays 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, April 30, Dec 25. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 36.

Anne Frank House (p. 123) CANAL BELT Too popular for its own good (it's been called "the Volendam of the Holocaust," i.e., a commercial exploitation of guilt), this little canal house is where Anne Frank wrote her celebrated diary when hiding with her family during the Nazi occupation. It has an annex for exhibitions and a cafe-restaurant to go with the souvenir boutique and bookstore.... *Tel 020/556-7100. www.annefrank.nl. Prinsengracht 263 at Westermarkt. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open April–Aug daily 9am–9pm; Sept–March daily 9am–7pm; Jan 1 and Dec 25 noon–7pm. Closed Yom Kippur. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 26.

Aquadam (p. 128) WESTERN ISLANDS Luxury saloon boats.... *Tel 020/344-9434. Bickersgracht 1 at Haarlemmer Houttuinen. Tram 3 to Zoutkeetsgracht; buses 18, 22 to Haarlemmer Houttuinen. Rental rates range from 175€ ($201) an hour for a 10-passenger launch, to 350€ ($403) an hour for a 40-passenger launch.*

See Map 10 on p. 108, bullet 2.

Artis Zoo (p. 130) EAST Founded in 1838, the oldest zoo in Europe has about 6,000 animals from around the world. And what would a 19th-century temple of the natural sciences be without a planetarium and museums of geology and zoology?.... *Tel 020/523-3400. www.artis.nl. Plantage Kerklaan 38–40 at Plantage Middenlaan. Trams 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan; 6 to Plantage Doklaan. Open April–Oct daily 9am–6pm, Nov–March daily 9am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 18.

Bartolotti House (p. 121, 139) CANAL BELT Built in 1618, this patrician mansion north of the Golden Bend is an architectural landmark but not open for comprehensive tours.... *Tel 020/551-3300. Herengracht 170–172 at Raadhuisstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Tues–Fri 11am–5pm, Sat–Sun 1–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 30.

Bavaria Pool-Snookercentrum (p. 132) OLD SOUTH Probably the city's hottest spot to chalk a cue, with four floors of tables, including billiards, carambole, snooker, and pool. Call ahead to reserve.... *Tel 020/676-7903. Van Ostadestraat 97 at Ferdinand Bolstraat. Trams 3 to Ferdinand Bolstraat; 12, 16, 24, 25 to Ceintuurbaan. Open daily 11am–1am, Fri–Sat until 2am. Admission charged.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 74.

Begijnhof (p. 115, 117, 135) CENTER This gorgeous 14th-century *hofje* (almshouse), built around an oblong courtyard, is home to the oldest house in Amsterdam, the English Reformed Church (believed to have been built in 1392), and many other historic treasures.... *No phone. Spui, north side (no number). Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open daylight hours. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 38.

Beurs van Berlage (Berlage Stock Exchange) (p. 119, 134) CENTER This large 1896 Dutch Art Nouveau building—the city's former stock exchange—is an intriguing piece of architecture, covering an entire city block; it's now a conference center, museum, and art exhibition and concert hall. It also houses a stunning cafe, open only during exhibitions.... *Tel 020/624-0141. Damrak 277 at Beursplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Tues–Sun 11am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 56.

Bijbels Museum (Biblical Museum) (p. 133) CANAL BELT A quiet museum for religious scholars in a fascinating building—twin 1662 canal houses with mythological scenes painted by Jacob de Wit.... *Tel 020/624-2436. www.bijbelsmuseum.nl. Herengracht 366–368 at Huidenstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, April 30. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 39.

Buiksloterwegveer (p. 135) CENTER One of two free city-operated ferries that crosses the IJ channel from docks directly behind Centraal Station to Amsterdam Noord.... *Tel (use general transit number) 0900/9292. Departs from pier 7. Operates daily around the clock; 6:30am–9pm every 15 minutes, 9pm–6:30am every half hour.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 48.

Canal Bikes (p. 126, 127) CANAL BELT The Dutch call pedalos "canal bikes." Rent them and get splashed with brown water.... *Tel 020/626-5574. Available daily 10am–7pm (July–Aug 10am–10pm) at docks at: Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Keizersgracht (at Leidsestraat), and the Anne Frank House. Rental is 8€ ($9.20) per person hourly for 1 or 2 people; 7€ ($8.05) per person hourly for 3 or 4 people; you'll need to leave a deposit of 50€ ($58).*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 27, 42, 45, 47.

Canal Bus (p. 128) CENTER Amsterdam's answer to Venice's vaporetti, though locals don't use it.... *Tel 020/623-9886. Boat-buses stop about every 30 minutes at docks at the Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Keizersgracht (at Raadhuisstraat), Westerkerk (at the Anne Frank House), Centraal Station, and City Hall. Hop on and off from 10am–6:30pm daily. Tickets required.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 53.

De Keizer Snooker Club (p. 132) CANAL BELT A classy pool hall for serious players not interested in socializing.... *Tel 020/623-1586. Keizersgracht 256. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open daily 1pm–1am, Fri–Sat until 2am. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 33.

De Pinto House (p. 120, 137) JEWISH QUARTER Bought and remodeled in 1651 by Isaac de Pinto, a Portuguese Jew who fled persecution and co-founded the United East India Company, this early-1600s mansion is now a public library.... *No phone. Sint-Antoniesbreestraat 69. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Open Mon–Fri 9:30am–5pm. Admission free.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 7.

De Rieker Windmill (p. 121) SOUTHERN SUBURBS In the far-flung Amstelpark, detour to the riverbank for this 1636 thatched windmill, now a private home.... *No telephone. Amsteldijk at De Borcht in the Amstelpark. Bus 148 to Kalfjeslaan. Not open to the public.*

See Map 10 on p. 108, bullet 4.

De Waag (p. 125) CENTER An original, and still impressive, turreted city gate—now home to a multimedia center and a trendy cafe-restaurant.... *Tel 020/557-9898. Nieuwmarkt 4. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Cafe-restaurant and multimedia center open Sun–Thurs 10am–1am, Fri–Sat 10am–2am. Admission charged to exhibitions in main building.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 59.

East India House (Oost Indisch Huis) **(p. 120)** CENTER The University of Amsterdam now has offices in what was the nerve center of the Dutch commercial empire from 1603 until recent times.... *No phone. Oude Hoogstraat at Kloveniersburgwal. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Not open to the public; you can visit the courtyard. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 40.

Erotic Museum **(p. 129)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Run by the same charmers who own the Bananenbar and Casa Rosso, this porno haven is filled with books, films, vibrators, S&M accessories, and customers with sweaty palms.... *Tel 020/624-7303. www.casarosso.com. Oudezijds Achterburgwal 54 at Kreupelsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 11am–1am, Fri–Sat until 2am. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 58.

Flower Market (Bloemenmarkt) **(p. 114, 115, 139)** CANAL BELT The famous flower market that "floats" on the sidewalk, piers, and a few old barges anchored to the Singel. Gorgeous plants and cut flowers, plus bulbs and seeds.... *No phone. Singel between Muntplein and Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein; 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 44.

Frans Hals Museum **(p. 140)** HAARLEM The almshouse where the great painter died, now the biggest museum attraction in Haarlem.... *Tel 023/511-5775. www.franshalsmuseum.com. Groot Heiligland 62 at Gasthuis Vest, Haarlem. Trains to Haarlem from Centraal Station. Open Tues–Sat 11am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Dec 25. Admission charged.*

De Gooyer Windmill **(p. 121)** EASTERN DOCKS A 1725 former corn mill, northeast of Artis Zoo, it now houses Bierbrouwerij 't IJ, the city's best microbrewery, with a vast summer terrace (see p. 121).... *Tel 020/622-8325. Funenkade 7 at Sarphatistraat. Trams 7, 10 to Pontanusstraat. Admission free.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 20.

The Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum **(p. 129)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Everything you ever wanted to know about the pungent weed is explained and displayed at this private museum in the Red-Light District.... *Tel 020/623-5961. www.hashmuseum.com. Oudezijds Achterburgwal 130 at Stoofsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 11am–10pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 61.

Heineken Experience **(p. 114, 115)** OLD SOUTH Actually, the last can left the brewery in 1988; most of the plant has been demolished to make way for upscale apartments and shops. You and several hundred other visitors tour the atmospheric beer museum and learn about hops and grain and water; then you can

drink two glasses of the stuff, free, and as many more as you have the cash and the capacity for.... *Tel 020/523-9666, www.heinekenexperience.com. Stadhouderskade 78 at Ferdinand Bolstraat. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Stadhouderskade. Open Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Closed Jan 1, Dec 25. Visitors under 18 admitted only with parental supervision. Admission charged.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 73.

Historic Ferry (p. 131) CENTER This old ferry plies the IJ channel to Nieuwendam.... *Tel 0900/423-1100. Leaves from pier 8 behind Centraal Station. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. Operates mid-April to mid-Oct daily, at noon, 2, and 4pm. Tickets needed.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 49.

Holland Experience (p. 114) JEWISH QUARTER A multidimensional film and theater show that gives you something of a nutshell picture of Holland.... *Tel 020/422-2233. www.hollandexperience.nl. Waterlooplein 17. Metro and trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open daily 10am–10pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 10.

Hollandsche Schouwburg (p. 137) JEWISH QUARTER An estimated 60,000 to 80,000 Jews crossed the threshold of this turn-of-the-20th-century comedy theater (now gutted and roofless) for "processing" before being sent by train to Westerbork concentration camp, and on to the Nazi death camps.... *Tel 020/626-9945. Plantage Middenlaan 24. Trams 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan. Open daily 11am–4pm. Admission free.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 17.

Homomonument (p. 139) CANAL BELT Erected in 1987, this unique monument commemorates gay men and lesbians persecuted down the centuries worldwide. It is a rallying point for the gay community.... *No phone. Westermarkt. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 29.

Hortus Botanicus (p. 137) EAST The lovely 17th-century park and greenhouses of this botanical garden display 6,000 or so specimens in a quiet haven.... *Tel 020/625-9021. Plantage Middenlaan 2A at Plantage Parklaan. Trams 6 to Plantage Parklaan; 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan. Open April–Sept Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, weekends 11am–5pm; Oct–March Mon–Fri 9am–4pm, weekends 11am–4pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 14.

Houseboat Museum (p. 130) CANAL BELT In the 1914 former cargo barge *Hendrika Maria,* a houseboat for decades, and now a house museum. Discover what life's like on the Amsterdam canals.... *Tel 020/427-0750. www.houseboatmuseum.nl. Prinsengracht, moored opposite number 296, at Elandsgracht. Trams*

6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open March–Oct Wed–Sun 11am–5pm; Nov–Feb Fri–Sun 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, April 30, and Dec 25, 26, and 27. Admission charged.

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 34.

House with the Heads (Huis met de Hoofden) **(p. 121, 139)** CANAL BELT This 1624 mansion, built by Hendrick de Keyser, is celebrated for the six large sculptured heads on the facade.... *No phone. Keizersgracht 121 at Leliegracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Not open to the public.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 24.

Huis Marseille **(p. 117, 139)** CANAL BELT Amsterdam's impressive photography foundation, in a 1665 canal house, has rotating shows of work by international talents.... *Tel 020/531-8989. www.huismarseille.nl. Keizersgracht 401 at Leidsegracht. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Keizersgracht. Open Tues–Sun 11am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 40.

IJ-Veer **(p. 135, 136)** CENTER Free city-run ferry that crosses the IJ Channel from docks directly behind Centraal Station to Amsterdam Noord.... *Tel (use the general transit number) 0900/9292. Leaves pier 8 every 15 minutes, Mon–Fri 6:35am–6:05pm. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 50.

Jewish Historical Museum **(p. 122, 137)** JEWISH QUARTER This vast museum, housed in four ancient synagogues, displays photos, paintings, documents, and other objects relating to Jewish culture in the Netherlands. There's also a museum cafe and shop.... *Tel 020/625-4229. www.jhm.nl. Jonas Daniël Meijerplein 2–4 at Waterlooplein. Metro and trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open daily 11am–5pm. Closed Yom Kippur. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 12.

Jewish Memorial **(p. 137)** JEWISH QUARTER Commemorating the estimated 75,000 Amsterdam Jews killed by Nazi atrocities during World War II.... *No phone. Waterlooplein at Zwanenburgwal. Metro and trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 9.

Kindermuseum **(p. 130)** See Tropenmuseum.

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 21.

Kromhout Shipyard Museum **(p. 130)** EASTERN DOCKS This small working shipyard in eastern Amsterdam, where historic boats are still repaired, has two magnificent ironwork sheds plus a handful of old ships and scores of early ship engines.... *Tel 020/627-6777. Hoogte Kadijk 147 at Kruithuisstraat. Buses 22, 32 to Wittenburgergracht. Open Mon–Fri 10am–4pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 19.

Maritime Museum (p. 122, 129) EASTERN DOCKS Everything Dutch relating to the sea.... *Tel 020/523-2222. www.generali.nl/scheepvaartmuseum. Kattenburgerplein 1 at Prins Hendrikkade. Buses 22, 28 to Kattenburgergracht. Open Tues–Sun 10am–5pm (also Mon mid-June to mid-Sept). Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 6.

Metz & Co. (p. 119) CANAL BELT The panoramic, top-floor cafe of this upscale department store at the junction of Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat has lovely views over canal houses and mansions.... *Tel 020/520-7020. Keizersgracht 455 at Leidsestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Keizersgracht. Open Mon 11am–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri 9:30am–6pm, Thurs 9:30am–9pm, Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 41.

Monne de Miranda (p. 128) CENTER Vintage saloon-boat rentals include captain, crew, and well-stocked liquor cabinet.... *Tel 020/330-1234. Recht Boomssloot 47C at Geldersekade. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Rates vary widely.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 60.

Multatuli Museum (p. 134) CENTER Photos, first-edition books, and old furniture in this one-room house-museum dedicated to the 19th-century satirical writer Eduard Douwes-Dekker.... *Tel 020/638-1938. Korsjespoortsteeg 20 at Singel. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Nieuwezijds Kolk. Open Tues 10am–5pm, Sat noon–5pm, and by appointment. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 25.

Museumboot (p. 127, 128) CANAL BELT Hop-on, hop-off service to 20 museums, with 10% to 15% reductions on museum entry fees. Stops at Centraal Station, Anne Frank House, Rijksmuseum, Leidsegracht (at Herengracht), Muziektheater Kwartier, and Nautisch Kwartier.... *Tel 020/622-2181. www.lovers.nl. Boats run every 45 minutes 10am–6pm daily. Tickets required.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 54.

Muziektheater/Stadhuis (p. 135, 137) JEWISH QUARTER This vast, modern complex on the Amstel River at Waterlooplein houses both the city hall *(stadhuis)* and the Muziektheater opera/concert house.... *Tel 020/625-5455. Waterlooplein 22 or Amstel 1. Metro and trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Box office open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 11:30am–6pm. Admission free Tues at 12:15pm. Other times tickets required.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 11.

Netherlands Film Museum (p. 131) MUSEUM DISTRICT & VONDELPARK A resource center for cinematographers and film buffs, this movie museum has a two-screen theater that shows Dutch and other films to members.... *Tel 020/589-1400. Vondelpark 3 in Vondelpark. Trams 1 to Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat; 3, 12 to Overtoom. Cafe open daily. Library and*

exhibit: Tues–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 11am–5pm. Cinema: Mon–Fri from 7pm (and variable later times), Sat–Sun from 1pm (and variable later times). Admission charged for screenings.

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 69.

Netherlands Theater Institute Museum **(p. 121, 139)** CANAL BELT This rather dry resource center for performance arts students is in a gorgeous, restored 1638 canal house with a Golden Age garden.... *Tel 020/551-3300. www.tin.nl. Herengracht 168 at Leliegracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Tues–Fri 11am–5pm, weekends 1–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 30.

NEMO **(p. 114, 119, 129)** EASTERN DOCKS This harborside science and technology center features state-of-the-art virtual reality. Designed by Renzo Piano, it looks like a supertanker; great waterfront views from the roof.... *Tel 0900/919-1100. www.e-NEMO.nl. Oosterdok 2 at Prins Hendrikkade. Bus 22 to Kadijksplein. Open July–Aug daily 10am–5pm; Sept–June Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 5.

Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) **(p. 124)** CANAL BELT Venerable (but mostly retired) Protestant church on the Dam, now used to house exhibitions.... *Tel 020/638-6909. www.nieuwekerk.nl. The Dam. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 10am–6pm (Thurs until 10pm during exhibitions). Admission charged during exhibitions; free at other times.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 31.

Noorderkerk **(p. 138)** CANAL BELT Another marvel by ubiquitous architect Hendrick de Keyser. Built in 1623, it stands at the edge of the Jordaan and is surrounded several times a week by lively open markets.... *Tel 020/626-6436. Noordermarkt at Prinsengracht. Tram 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Martelaarsgracht; Opstapper minibus to Noordermarkt. Mon 10:30am–12:30pm, Sat 11am–1pm (followed by a 1-hour chamber music concert), Sun (services) 10am and 7pm. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 22.

Oude Kerk/Oude Kerkstoren (Old Church and Tower) **(p. 119, 124, 135, 136)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Ancient church (parts of it date to the early 13th century), in the heart of the Red-Light District.... *Tel 020/625-8284. www.oudekerk.nl. Oudekerksplein at Oudezijds Voorburgwal. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Sat 11am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm. Tower open June–Sept Wed–Sun 2–4pm; Sept–April Sun–Fri 1–5pm, Sat 11am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 57.

Pakhuis Amsterdam **(p. 119)** EASTERN DOCKS International interior design center in a reconverted warehouse east of Centraal Station; great views of city and harbor.... *Tel 020/421-1033.*

Oostelijke Handelskade 14–17 at Piet Heinkade. Buses 32, 39 to Piet Heinkade. Open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm.

See Map 10 on p. 108, bullet 3.

Petting Zoo (Kinderboerderij De Dierencapel) (p. 131) WESTERN ISLANDS Piglets, chickens, goats, sheep, and various other animals roam along the banks of a canal, near houseboats and shipyards, in the atmospheric Western Islands.... *Tel 020/420-6855. Bickersgracht 207 at Haarlemmer Houttuinen. Buses 18, 22 to Binnen Oranjestraat. Open Tues–Sun 9:30am–4pm. Donations accepted.*

See Map 10 on p. 108, bullet 1.

Pianola Museum (p. 134) JORDAAN Player-piano lovers congregate to listen to—and sing along with—vintage tunes played on 35 old pianolas.... *Tel 020/627-9624. Westerstraat 106 at Tweede Boomdwarsstraat. Trams 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Open Sun 11:30am–5pm and by appointment. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 23.

Portuguese Synagogue (p. 125, 137) JEWISH QUARTER Long the world's largest synagogue, this 1675 edifice miraculously survived the Nazi occupation.... *Tel 020/624-5351. www.esnoga.com. Mr. Visserplein 3. Trams 9, 14 to Mr. Visserplein. Open April–Oct Sun–Fri 10am–6pm; Nov–March Sun–Thurs 10am–6pm, Fri 10am–3pm. Closed Jewish holidays. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 13.

Rederij De Nederlanden (p. 128) CANAL BELT Classy and expensive, with luxury-vintage saloon boats.... *Tel 020/423-3006. www.denederlanden.com. Singel 309A at Oude Spiegelstraat (across the canal). Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Rates vary according to the boat, the number of passengers, the time of year, and the time of day.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 35.

Rembrandt House Museum (p. 123, 137) JEWISH QUARTER The artist lived and worked here from 1639 to 1658.... *Tel 020/520-0400, www.rembrandthuis.nl. Joodenbreestraat 4–6 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 8.

Resistance Museum (p. 122) JEWISH QUARTER Housed in the beautiful, neoclassical 1876 Plancius Building, which once housed a Jewish social club, the museum tells the story of Holland's experience of Nazi occupation during World War II.... *Tel 020/620-2535. www.verzetsmuseum.nl. Plantage Kerklaan 61 at Plantage Middenlaan. Trams 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan; 6 to Plantage Doklaan. Open Tues–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat–Mon. Closed Jan 1, April 30, Dec 25. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 16.

Rijksmuseum (p. 115, 136) MUSEUM DISTRICT & VONDELPARK Amsterdam's answer to the Louvre (though most of it is closed for renovations until 2008!). The architectural garden is open during museum hours.... *Tel 020/674-7047. www.rijksmuseum.nl. Stadhouderskade 42 at Museum District. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat; 6, 7, 10 to Weteringschans. Open daily 10am–5pm. Closed Jan 1. Admission charged.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 72.

Royal Palace (Koninklijk Paleis) (p. 113, 114, 119) CENTER The quintessential Golden Age architectural statement, designed in the mid–17th century to replace an earlier city hall.... *Tel 020/620-4060. www.koninklijkhuis.nl. The Dam. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open June–Aug daily 12:30–5pm, Sept–May hours vary widely. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 32.

Schuttersgalerij (Civic Guards Gallery) (p. 136) CENTER Difficult to find but worth it, this covered passageway houses 15 large 17th-century paintings showing the city's heroic Civic Guards.... *No phone. Between the Amsterdam Historical Museum and the Begijnhof. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, weekends 11am–5pm. Admission free.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 37.

Sex Museum (p. 129) CENTER A one-stop emporium of carnality. While many of the displays are flaccid, the voyeurs pour in by the thousands.... *Tel 020/622-8376. www.sexmuseumamsterdam.com. Damrak 18 at Prins Hendrikkade. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 to Centraal Station. Open daily 10am–11:30pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 51.

Spinhuis (p. 118) CENTER A landmark 1597 building in the Red-Light District used for centuries as a correctional facility, i.e., labor camp, for wayward women.... *No phone. Spinhuissteeg at Oudezijds Achterburgwal. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Not open to the public.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 65.

Stedelijk Museum (p. 116) MUSEUM DISTRICT & VONDELPARK A world-class modern and contemporary art museum.... *Tel 020/573-2737. www.stedelijkmuseum.nl. Paulus Potterstraat 13 at Museum District. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat; 16 to Museum District. Open daily 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1. Admission charged.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 70.

Teylers Museum (p. 140) HAARLEM An eclectic museum featuring everything from fossils to Michelangelo.... *Tel 023/531-9010. Spaarne 16 at Bakenessergracht, Haarlem. Trains to Haarlem from Centraal Station. Open Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. Closed Jan 1, Dec 25. Admission charged.*

Torture Museum (p. 129) CANAL BELT This highly commercial "museum" is little more than a cabinet of titillating horrors stuffed with scores of centuries-old instruments of torture.... *Tel 020/320-6642. Singel 449 at Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. Open daily 10am–11pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 43.

Tourist Tram (p. 131) CENTER The name says it all: This 1920s streetcar runs from Prins Hendrikkade at the top of Damrak (opposite the Victoria Hotel) around town, with stops at various museums and at Coster Diamonds, on Sundays and on Ascension Day.... *Tel 0900/423-1100. Operates March–Sept Sun and holidays hourly 11am–5pm. Tickets needed.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 52.

Trade Union Museum (De Burcht Vakbondsmuseum) (p. 133, 134) EAST Exhibits on the struggle of organized labor in the Netherlands; the Art Nouveau building by Hendrik Petrus van Berlage is worth a trip.... *Tel 020/624-1166. www.deburcht-vakbondsmuseum.nl. Henri Polaklaan 9 at Plantage Parklaan. Trams 6, 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan. Open Tues–Fri 11am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 15.

Tram Museum (Elektrische Museumtramlijn) (p. 131) AMSTERDAMSEBOS A freewheeling collection of old streetcars, trolleys, and trams rattles from the edge of town through the Amsterdamsebos to suburban Amstelveen in this "moving museum" of antique trams on which you can ride.... *Tel 020/673-7538. Amstelveenseweg 264 at Cornelis Krusemanstraat. Tram 16 to Haarlemmermeerstation. Easter–Aug Sun and holidays 10:30am–5:20pm. Tickets 5€ ($5.75), kids under 4 travel free.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 68.

Trippenhuis and Klein Trippenhuis (Trip House and Trip Coachman's House) (p. 120) CENTER A 1660s neoclassical mansion and narrow coachman's house.... *No phone. Kloveniersburgwal 29 and 26, respectively. Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Not open for visits.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 63.

Tropenmuseum and Kindermuseum (Tropical and Children's museums) (p. 130) EAST Established early this century, the permanent collection here was devised specifically to teach kids aged 6 to 12 about foreign cultures.... *Tel 020/568-8215. www.tropenmuseum.nl. Linnaeusstraat 2 at Mauritskade. Trams 7, 9, 10, 14 to Mauritskade. Open daily 10am–5pm (until 3pm Dec 5, 24, 31). Closed Jan 1, April 30, May 5, Dec 25; Kindermuseum: children 6–12 (1 adult per child is allowed), by appointment only (tel 020/568-8300), Wed, Sat, Sun, national holidays and school holidays. Admission charged.*

See Map 11 on p. 141, bullet 21.

Van Gogh Museum (p. 114, 116) MUSEUM DISTRICT & VONDELPARK Herein discover the tragic life and times of the mad, peripatetic Dutch genius, told in 200 of his oil paintings, hundreds of sketches, drawings, watercolors, and letters. Expanded with an exhibition wing.... *Tel 020/570-5200. www.vangoghmuseum.nl. Paulus Potterstraat 7 at Museum District. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat; 16 to Museum District. Open daily 10am–6pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 13 on p. 144, bullet 71.

Van Loon Museum (p. 123) CANAL BELT If you visit only one canal-house museum, make this it. You ring the bell of an imposing 1671 mansion (designed by Adriaen Dortsman) and are admitted to a showcase of life in the Dutch Golden Age.... *Tel 020/624-5255. www.museumvanloon.nl. Keizersgracht 672 at Vijzelstraat. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Keizersgracht. Open Fri–Mon 11am–5pm. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 46.

Westerkerk/Westertoren (Western Church and Tower) (p. 125, 139) CANAL BELT Arguably the masterpiece of the prolific Golden Age architect Hendrick de Keyser, this airy Protestant church is a city landmark.... *Tel 020/624-7766. Prinsengracht 281 at Westermarkt. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Church open Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, open Sun for worship only at 10:30am; tower open June–Sept Wed–Sat 10am–4pm. Church free; admission charge to climb tower.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 28.

Willet-Holthuysen Museum (p. 123, 133) CANAL BELT An atmospheric 1687 Golden Bend canal-house museum, opened in 1889.... *Tel 020/523-1822. Herengracht 605 at Utrechtsestraat. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, weekends and holidays 11am–5pm. Closed Jan 1, April 30, Dec 25. Admission charged.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 67.

Zuiderkerk/Zuidertoren (South Church and Tower) (p. 124, 135, 137) CENTER This 17th-century church has one of the finest carillons in town and houses a free, permanent exhibition on Amsterdam's development and planning down the centuries.... *Tel 020/622-2962. www.dro.amsterdam.nl. Zuiderkerkhof 72 at Sint-Antoniesbreestraat. Metro to Nieuwmarkt; trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Church open Mon–Wed and Fri noon–5pm, Thurs noon–8pm; tower open June–Sept, Wed–Sat 2–4pm. Church free; admission charge to climb tower.*

See Map 12 on p. 142, bullet 66.

GETTING

OUTSIDE

In Amsterdam, drinking beer and socializing at a brown cafe qualify as sports and recreation. Playing pool, snooker, carambole, or chess or picnicking in Vondelpark seem downright active. Like many Europeans, Amsterdammers just aren't sports fanatics. Locals are particularly baffled by joggers; biking is a form of transport, little more; canal bikes (as pedal boats, or pedalos, are known in Amsterdam) are strictly for tourists; rollerblading is for the trendy (and only in good weather, i.e., almost never). Amsterdammers consider golf a game for British snobs, so playing a round here is like ordering champagne at Oktoberfest. As for the seaside, the only readily accessible beach from Amsterdam is Zandvoort, and its scenery (high-rise apartments) and water (seaweed, jellyfish) are about as appetizing as the name. In short, don't come to Amsterdam looking for a resort experience: This is a northern European city–like city.

The Lowdown

Green spaces... Believe it or not, the tourist office has actually counted 28 parks, 220,000 trees, and 600,000 "bulb flowers" (tulips among them) in Amsterdam. Everything is green, including many houses, which often have a patina of moss and lichen. But everyone's favorite city park for picnics, cycling, and musical and carnal improvisation is **Vondelpark** in the Oud Zuid (Old South) neighborhood, just beyond the Singelgracht and near the big museums. Its landscaping is mid-1800s English Romantic, with meandering paths, ponds, and bridges, and it takes its name from Joost van den Vondel, a lighthearted poet of the Golden Age who lived too long for convenience (1587–1679) and died a pauper. His surname, pronounced "fondle," is certainly apropos for this park, given certain activities that go on under its bridges, particularly at night. **Hortus Botanicus** in eastern Amsterdam near Artis Zoo sounds terribly Latin and scientific, but it's a wonderful botanical garden that's been around since the 17th century. Sensitive souls love the quiet old greenhouses, and vegetarian visitors can enjoy a perverse thrill by cheering on the carnivorous botanical specimens (take that, flesh-eaters!).

Houseplant aficionados should ask to see the celebrated potted cycad, a palm that's about 400 years old. **Sarphatipark** (near the Heineken Experience and Albert Cuypstraat market), **Beatrixpark** (south of the New South), **Wertheim Park,** and **Oosterpark** (both close to

Artis Zoo) are all smallish, landscaped gardens with the usual ponds, paths, and kiddie play areas—but Wertheim, in the old Jewish Quarter, does have a monument to the victims of Auschwitz, and Oosterpark has a relatively new (2002) and spectacular monument to the victims of slavery (the Dutch were big in the African slavery trade). These parks are fine if you're in the neighborhood, but not really worth a detour unless you're visiting during the spectacular tulip season (April–May). You'll need a bike to make the trip to **Amstelpark** worth it, but this vast park on the Amstel River a few miles south of central Amsterdam has a remarkable rose garden and rhododendron dell. On its edge is the thatched 1636 De Rieker windmill that marks one of Rembrandt's favorite bucolic views (see the Diversions chapter).

When the Great Depression hit in the early 1930s, the city decided to put thousands of folks to work reclaiming land and foresting what is now the 2,200-acre **Amsterdamsebos** (buses 170, 171, 172 to Bosbaan). It's a wild and woolly place south of the city in suburban Amstelveen. But if you're hankering for seriously long walks, or bike, pony, and horse rides along miles of waterways through deep, dark forests, this is the place. The **Bosmuseum,** at the northwestern edge of the park (and due to be replaced in 2004 by a new Bezoekerscentrum/Visitor Center, incorporating the museum, beside the Olympic rowing course) tells the not-exactly-riveting story of the park; pick up a map of the park there or study the one at the main entrance. There's also a goat farm, where you can buy goat-milk cheese, ice cream, and fresh milk; animal reserves for deer and buffalo; a miniature golf course (Amsterdammers call it "midgetgolf"); and a children's play pool. Too bad the jets to and from Schiphol Airport roar overhead every few minutes.

Two-wheeling it... Locals bike everywhere to get around, not for recreation. There are probably as many bikes as inhabitants (the official number is 500,000, but tens of thousands are fished from the canals or pried off lampposts every year). Bike lanes abound, so use them because Dutch drivers can be amazingly aggressive. Contrary to what you'd expect, the most awkward and frustrating areas to ride in are the Grachtengordel of grand canals and the Red-Light District. Neither has bike lanes, the streets are

cobbled, uneven, and narrow, and there are so many landmark buildings that you'll be constantly stopping for a look. You're better off walking. The same goes for the center of town, between Spui and Centraal Station. The best places to cruise undisturbed include the atmospheric Jordaan, where there is little traffic; big parks like Vondelpark, Amstelpark, and Amsterdamsebos; the quiet Western Islands and sprawling Eastern Docklands (including the new architecturally astonishing Java and Borneo islands); the residential Old South and New South; and across the IJ channel in Nieuwendam.

Locals snicker at tourists with bikes bearing the rental company's name. If that sort of thing matters to you, rent an unmarked bike from friendly **Frederic Rent A Bike** (Brouwersgracht 78; tel 020/624-5509; www.frederic.nl) or **Bike City** (Bloemgracht 68–70; tel 020/626-3721); both have good bikes, friendly staff, and low rates. The biggest and cheapest (per day) operator is **Take-A-Bike** (Centraal Station/Stationsplein 12; tel 020/624-8391). **Holland Rent A Bike** (Damrak 247; tel 020/622-3207) has higher rates than most, but offers a choice of hundreds of bikes, including children's models, tandems, and mountain bikes (though mountains aren't too common in the city). At **Mac Bike** (Mr. Visserplein 2, tel 020/620-0985, and Marnixstraat 220, tel 020/626-6964; www.macbike.nl) you get a basket with a big name on it, but the place also has fast-food service and the option of taking theft insurance, a rare but valuable benefit. If your rented bike is stolen, it is usually your responsibility. Always use the locks provided, and always ask about the policy on stolen bikes: If insurance isn't available, how much does it cost to replace a bike?

Cycling beyond the city limits... Outside Amsterdam, almost every highway and major country road has a bike lane. The land is as flat as the proverbial pancake, so you can cover a lot of ground, but beware that frequent, strong head winds can double or triple traveling times; the reverse may be true if you've got a tail wind. You can either rent a bike in town and cycle out, put your bike on a train (though not during rush hour), or take a train or bus out of Amsterdam and rent a bike where you get off: Bikes are readily available all over Holland. A free ferry ride across the IJ channel from Centraal Station can put you and your

bike on the road to several popular villages, including centuries-old Nieuwendam and Durgerdam, exclusive Broek in Waterland, the old fishing ports of Monnickendam and Marken, and the kitschy Volendam and Edam, two tourist-dependent villages that made their names on eels and wax-wrapped cheese, respectively. The ferry crossing to Amsterdam Noord takes 5 minutes on one route (the *Buikersloterwegveer*, operating around the clock from pier 7), and 10 minutes on the other (the *IJ-Veer* from pier 8, running weekdays only and quitting just after 6pm), leaving you a short ride to the atmospheric streets of **Nieuwendam,** one of the city's oldest suburbs. From the ferry terminal, head due north on any of the streets paralleling the right, or east, side of the Hollandskanaal until you reach Nieuwendammerdijk, which veers east. South, on your right, is the wooded W. H. Vliegenbos park, the IJ, and shipyards. On the north side of the road, your left, are scores of narrow streets lined with centuries-old, two-story brick and timbered buildings. You can stop at the Kleine Haven, the small harbor of the village of Nieuwendam, and sit at a cafe. One-way from Centraal Station to the middle of Nieuwendam, including the ferry, shouldn't take you more than 30 minutes.

To get to the other villages, don't veer east on the Nieuwendammerdijk, but follow the bike lanes along either side of the Hollandskanaal through the Florapark and Volewijkspark. Bike lanes fan out once you reach the picturesque Buikslotermeerdijk and Noord Hollandsch Kanaaldijk, dikes with clearly marked routes to the next closest stops: Broek in Waterland and Monnickendam. **Broek in Waterland** (12km/7.44 miles from the ferry terminal, also reachable on bus 111) sits at the end of a route that follows canals, overlooks polders, and traverses pastureland. A picture-book village with old wooden houses, many of them white, it's a suburb where Amsterdam millionaires live, and is known as one of the tidiest—and most conservative—spots on earth. It has a 1628 Protestant church with gorgeous carved pews and painted woodwork; an unbelievably cute central pond (the Havenrak) with a white pagoda gazebo from 1656 (Napoléon was received here by the mayor); and scores of winding lanes with big houses and flower-filled gardens.

About 6.5km (4.03 miles) north, through the same pleasant but never-dramatic scenery, is **Monnickendam** (reachable via bus 111), a former fishing port on the IJsselmeer noted for its smoked herring and now a favorite on tourist itineraries (the clogs and costumes start to spring up). Among the countless old buildings on winding streets are De Waag, a weigh house similar to the one in Amsterdam's Nieuwmarkt; the hulking, gothic Grote Sint-Nicolaaskerk; the ornate, 18th-century city hall; and the tall Speeltoren, a brick tower from the 1500s with a tuneful carillon. A few miles east is **Marken,** once a fishing village on an island, but since 1957 linked to the mainland by a causeway, and now totally dependent on tourism. Here is high kitsch: The traditional Dutch costumes are always in full bloom (wide, striped dresses and skirts, long dark smocks, and white caps); clogs are carved to order. The old wooden houses—matte green with horizontal white stripes—stand in clumps on pilings because once upon a time, the tides of the Zuiderzee, closed off in the 1930s, reached them.

Volendam, a few miles due north of Monnickendam, was an eel-fishing port but has suffered the same economic fate as most of the other villages. This is the quintessence of package-tour Holland, and the place to see costumes (winged cotton-and-lace caps), clogs, and wall-to-wall boutiques. Cheese making and Amsterdam commuters lend nearby **Edam** (a few miles northeast) a bit of dignity, though most of the famous, bland curd is made elsewhere. The Kaasmarkt (cheese market, open 10am–noon Wed July–Aug) is purely for tourists—an exquisitely cheesey theme-park adventure, featuring canal boats and wagons and men in silly costumes. The town itself is crammed with picture-postcard Golden Age houses and the Grote Sint-Nicolaaskerk, whose stained glass is remarkable. The landmark bell tower has a 16th-century carillon. (See "Tiptoeing through the tulips" and "The windmills of your mind," later in this chapter, for other recommended cycling destinations.)

Island hopping... Eastern Amsterdam is booming: From the rehabbed **Pakhuis Amsterdam** warehouse (a building in the redeveloping Eastern Dock area; see the Diversions chapter) to the new artificial islands called **Java** and

Borneo, the city has added thousands of new, wacky buildings to its repertoire. You pedal from Centraal Station due east past the new ferry terminal, turn left after Pakhuis, and cross a wild bridge that looks like a giant grasshopper to reach Java island. A broad road rings the island, with views of the IJ. Finished in late 2001, the buildings here and on the adjacent Borneo island are a crazy postmodern hodgepodge evoking your kids' Lego creations and wavy Manhattan Beach houses, with mock Venetian bridges over tiny canals and grassy inner courtyards. This is great biking or walking territory: quiet, clean, and fascinating for its unsettling futuristic qualities. The free ferry *IJ-Veer 35* (see the Diversions chapter) links Java island to Centraal Station's pier 8, with views en route.

Pedaling and paddling on the water... Bike-obsessed Amsterdammers call pedal boats *waterfiets* or *grachtenfiets,* which they have charmingly translated as "canal bikes." Of course they never use them, but who cares? You can pick 'em up and drop 'em off all day, any day at four **Canal Bike** docks in the city: Rijksmuseum, Leidseplein, Keizersgracht (at Leidsestraat), and the Anne Frank House (tel 020/626-5574 for all locations; rates are 7€ ($8.05) hourly per person for one or two people, 6€ ($6.90) hourly per person for three or four people; deposit required). Farther afield, **Duikelaar,** at the western suburban Sloterpark (Noordzijde 41; tel 020/613-8855; deposit and passport required), rents canoes for about half the price of a water bike, but you're limited to the park's fairly dull waterways. The boathouse at the **Amsterdamsebos** south of town (no tel; March–Sept only; rates about 5€/$5.75 per hour; deposit and ID required) has pedalos (another word for water bikes) and canoes, and the park's Roeibaan rowing lake alone is well over a mile long.

Horsing around... The Amsterdamsebos in Amstelveen is the best place to saddle up for outdoor riding, but you won't find many Western saddles, except on ponies. You can mount there at **Amsterdamse Manege** (Nieuwe Kalfjeslaan 25; tel 020/643-1342; 20€/$23 per hour; reservations essential; bring your own boots, hat, and crop for dressage), whose stables and indoor riding area are used by the serious horsey set, though kids and beginners are welcome and

there are plenty of ponies. Monitors will lead you out into the 2,200-acre wooded park. Closer into town, and housed in a gorgeous 19th-century building, is the **Hollandse Manege** (Vondelstraat 140; tel 020/618-0942; 20€/$23 per hour; reservations essential), great for a visit even if you don't ride.

The squash and tennis racket... Amsterdam encourages fans of racquet sports to do most of their swinging indoors, but there are a few tennis courts where you can expose your backhand to the elements. Thrifty, unpretentious types wait outside for hours to play on one of **Vondelpark**'s four free courts. In the Amsterdamsebos is **Amstelpark Sportcentrum** (Koenenkade 8; tel 020/301-0700; about 20€/$23 per hour outdoors, 25€/$29 indoors, racquets free; reservations essential), Holland's biggest tennis school, with 26 outdoor courts and 16 indoor courts (as well as 12 squash courts and a tanning and fitness center). In the suburb of Buitenveldert, south, near the Amstelpark, is a string of indoor and outdoor tennis courts at clubs that stand practically next door to each other. The best of these is **Gold Star Tennis** (Gustav Mahlerlaan 20; tel 020/644-5483; www.goldstar.nl; about 20€/$23 per hour, racquets 3€/$3.45 and up per hour; reservations essential), with 24 outdoor and 12 indoor courts.

The hippest thing in high-strung sports these days is whacking a hard rubber ball around a tiny white court (indoors, of course) at see-and-be-seen **Squash City Body Club** (Ketelmakerstraat 6; tel 020/626-7883; about 30€/$35 per 45 minutes, racquet rental 3€/$3.45 and up; reserve ahead; 14 courts). Of course, squash isn't the only—or perhaps even the main—thing at this hip fitness club in the Western Islands neighborhood. It has a cafe and *gezellig* bar, a sauna, a Turkish bath, a health-food restaurant, and plenty of gorgeous male and female trainers eager to teach you fat-burning step and funk aerobics. Serious, humorless squash fanatics hone their skills next door to Gold Star Tennis at **Dicky Squash** (Gustav Mahlerlaan 16; tel 020/646-2266; about 12€/$14 per hr.; racquets available; reserve ahead). **Frans Otten Stadion** (Stadionstraat 10; tel 020/662-8767; squash 15€–18€/$17–$20 per half-hour slot, tennis about 18€–20€/$20–$23 per hour, racquet rental 3€/$3.45 and up; reserve ahead), in

the distinctly unhip, far-flung southwest area of town near the Olympic Stadium, is a place where serious players compete on 20 squash courts and half a dozen indoor tennis courts (plus fitness center).

Jogging and pickup sports... Basketball isn't big here, but try Vondelpark if you're looking to get in on a pickup game. **Soccer** (*voetball,* football) is taken very seriously in Amsterdam, and you might be able to pick up a game on the cobbled, exquisitely unforgiving Amstelveld on Prinsengracht (just off Reguliersgracht) or in Vondelpark, Amstelpark, or Amsterdamsebos. The best **jogging** territory is not in the city at all (too many cobbled streets and too much traffic). Again, head out to the Amstelpark and Amsterdamsebos (where you'll find marked hiking paths and fitness circuits). Vondelpark gets too crowded with picnickers, cyclists, and strollers to be ideal for jogging, though if you stick to the (often muddy) perimeter trail you'll be all right. **Roller skaters** and **'bladers** meet at 8pm at the Café Vertigo in Vondelpark every Friday night, year-round, and skate in a jolly group around the city. You'd better be good enough to stop at red lights, and avoid speeding bikes and trams, though!

On ice... As romantic as it may sound, canal skating in Amsterdam has become all but obsolete; only thrice in the last decade has the ice been thick enough for skating. Try pond or rink skating in the parks—**Vondelpark** and **Oosterpark** are favorites—or squares: the **Museum District** has a pond. From roughly early November through February, depending on temperatures. Try the recently restored, world-class indoor-outdoor rink in suburban Watergraafsmeer, the **Jaap Edenbaan** (Radioweg 64; tel 020/694-9652; 4€/$4.60 to enter, 5€/$5.75 to rent skates).

In the swim... To swim and enjoy Amsterdam School architecture at a single plunge, go to the hip, handsome **Zuiderbad** (Hobbemastraat 26; tel 020/679-2217; about 5€/$5.75 admission), a recently renovated indoor pool built just before World War I, with glistening tiles and mosaics, arches, and relief sculptures. Nude swimming is always Sunday afternoons. **De Mirandabad** (De Mirandalaan 9;

tel 020/546-4444; about 5€/$5.75) is a mock beach resort on the southeast edge of town, with an indoor mock lake complete with sandy beach, wave machine, slides, and in addition, an outdoor Olympic pool (open May 15–Sept 15). On the opposite side of town, at the suburban Sloterpark, **Duikelaar** watersports center (Noordzijde 41; tel 020/613-8855; pools open May–Oct only; about 5€/$5.75 to swim) has both indoor and outdoor pools; you can also rent sailboards, canoes, and tiny sailboats for use on the park's waterways.

Tiptoeing through the tulips... How many Netherlanders does it take to screw in the bulbs at **Keukenhof Garden** (tel 0252/465-555; tickets required)? Several thousand, probably, since there are more than 7 million hyacinths, lilies, crocuses, narcissi, and daffodils, 600 kinds of tulips, and myriad other bulb plants blooming from late March to late May at this, the world's biggest bulb garden. The sight is seriously spectacular; you won't even notice the other million visitors tiptoeing alongside you through the 80 acres of romantic gardens, with a pond and canals, meandering paths, and a centuries-old hunting lodge that belonged to a Bavarian countess. Regular commuter trains run about every 15 minutes daily until midnight from Centraal Station to Haarlem or Leiden stations; the local bus ride on to Lisse through miles of bulb fields is kaleidoscopic. The 8m to 24m (4.96- to 14.88-mile) ride to Keukenhof is even more spectacular on a bike, which you could bring with you on the train from central Amsterdam.

Nothing could be more Dutch than the **Aalsmeer Bloemenveiling** (Aalsmeer Flower Auction; Legmeerdijk 313; tel 0297/392-185; weekdays 7:30–11am; admission 4.50€/$5.20; bus 172 from Centraal Station), where scents of *bloemen* and euros blend intoxicatingly. Several billion cut flowers and nearly half a billion green plants are auctioned here weekdays year-round, in a vast in- and outdoor sales area practically the size of old Amsterdam. Visitors cannot participate in the auction. The Dutch countdown method is used, whereby a starting price is given and progressively drops as time passes, marked on a huge timer that clicks nervously from 100 down to 1. Hundreds of buyers must guess when colleagues will hit their buzzers.

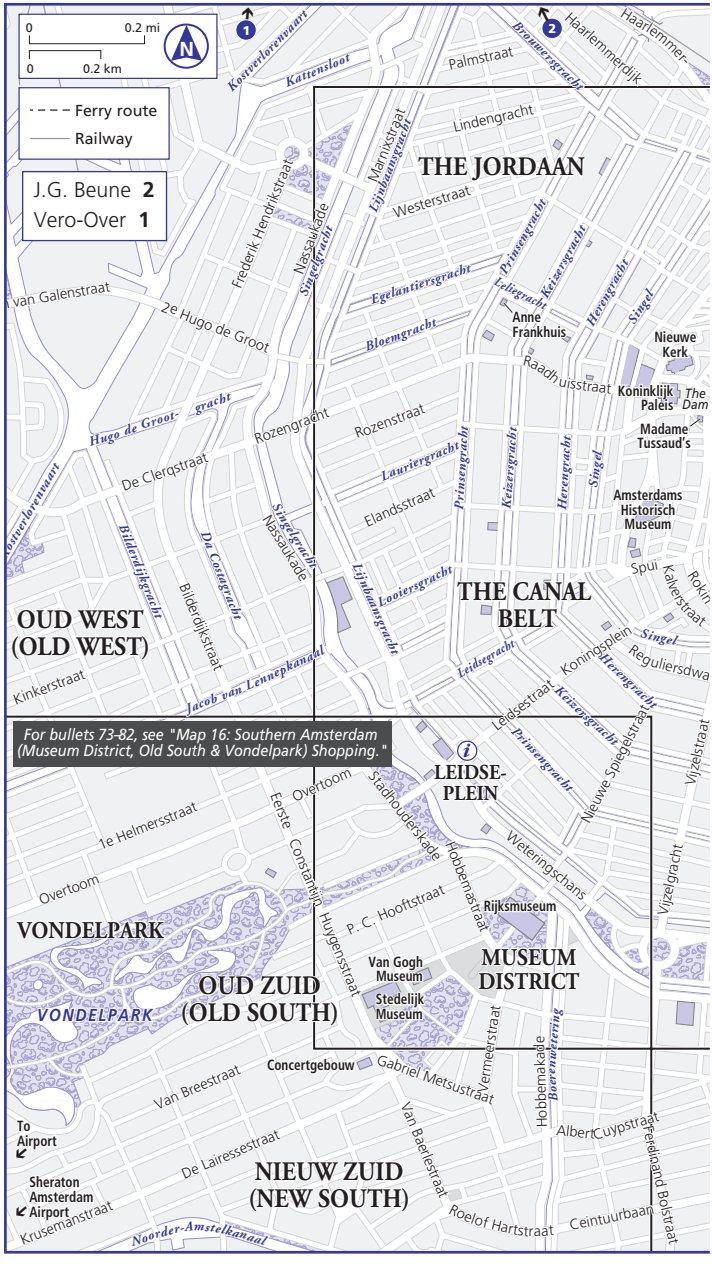
From a viewing platform you see thousands of specimens being shunted around. It's all very exciting; deals are done in seconds, but the spectacle is strictly for early birds since the best bits are over by 9:30am.

The windmills of your mind... Hidden among the smokestacks of heavy industry is the unusual but handsome mock-village of **Zaanse Schans,** 16km (9.92 miles) north of Amsterdam (tel 075/616-2221 or 075/635-1747; open daily April–Oct 8:30am–6pm, till 5pm Oct–March; admission charged to individual attractions; trains to Koog-Zaandijk, then a 10-minute walk across the river). Since about 1950, the Dutch government has been moving old buildings and windmills here from blighted areas around the country to create a habitat that simulates Dutch life of about 200 years ago. A few souls do inhabit the place—after all, someone has to run the souvenir boutiques, restaurants, and workshops. The village draws about 800,000 visitors a year, the big attraction being the working windmills that grind oil seeds, grain for flour, paint pigments, and mustard seeds. From April to October you and the mob can visit the mills and some of the historic buildings. Off-season, the sights close, and you can stroll around alone at no charge and soak up the ghostly atmosphere. A new bonus is the **Zaans Museum,** an ultramodern cultural-history vessel dedicated to the life and times of the Zaan River region. There are multimedia displays (wonderful 1920s and '30s black-and-white movies about wind, mills, water, and industry), plus a grab bag of tools, objects, paintings, furniture, sleighs, sailboats, and more. Funny to find a fully fledged museum like this on the edge of such a quintessentially Dutch theme park (tel 075/616-8218; open Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; admission charged). Across the Zaan River at the village of Koog aan de Zaan is the **Molenmuseum (Mill Museum),** where you can learn how Holland's 9,000 windmills of 150 years ago have been reduced to a mere 900 today. Grist for the mill.

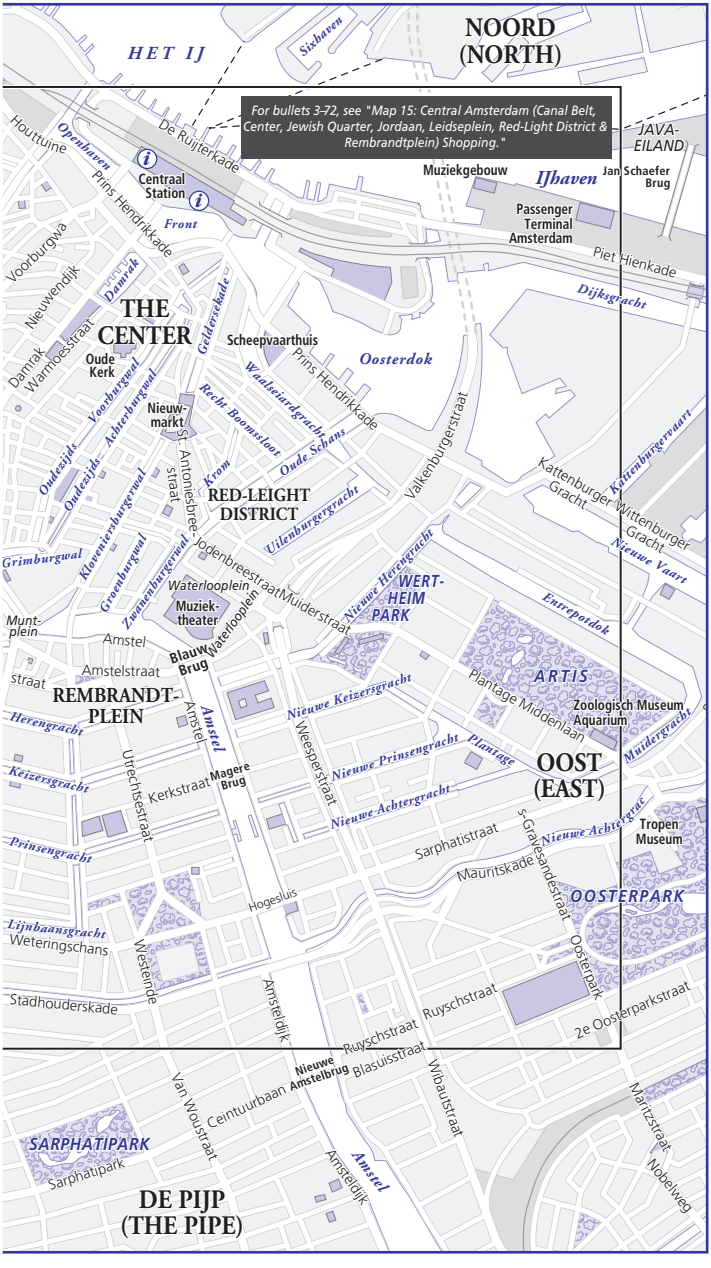
SHOP

PING 5

Map 14: Amsterdam Shopping



For bullets 73-82, see "Map 16: Southern Amsterdam (Museum District, Old South & Vondelpark) Shopping."


HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD
(NORTH)
For bullets 3-72, see "Map 15: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jewish Quarter, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Shopping."
Houttuine
Openhaven
De Ruijterkade
JAVA-
EILAND
Centraal
Station
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer
Brug
Passenger
Terminal
Amsterdam
Piet Hienkade
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Dijksgracht
THE
CENTER
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Geldersekade
Damrak
Warmoesstraat
Oude
Kerk
Voorburgwal
Achterburgwal
Nieuw-
markt
Rechtboomssloot
Prins Hendrikkade
Oudezijds
Oudezijds
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburger-
Gracht
Wittenburger
Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Kromboomssloot
Oude Schans
Valkenburgerstraat
RED-LEIGHT
DISTRICT
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgwal
Jodenbreestraat
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-
HEIM
PARK
Entrepotdok
Waterlooplein
Waterlooplein
Muziek-
theater
Munt-
plein
Amstel
Blauwbrug
Amstelstraat
straat
REMBRANDT-
PLEIN
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum
Aquarium
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Herengracht
Amstel
Weesperstraat
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Plantage
Muidergracht
Keizersgracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere
Brug
OOST
(EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Prinsengracht
Sarphatistraat
s-Gravelandsestraat
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Tropen
Museum
Mauritskade
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westeinde
Oosterpark
Stadhouderskade
Amsteldijk
Ruyschstraat
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
Nieuwe
Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
Maritzstraat
Nobelweg
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amsteldijk
DE PIJP
(THE PIPE)

Basic Stuff

As a city with a long history of trading, Amsterdam is loaded with tempting wares, at premium prices, from all over the world. But as a small burg with a scant tradition in manufacturing or design, it's a bit short on only-in-Amsterdam bargains on world-class merchandise. There are no local crafts industries to speak of, unless you count clog making or ship repair; the best porcelain comes from nearby Delft, or Makkum in Friesland, but frankly, you can get the same stuff in American department stores at comparable prices. Much ado is made of mock-antique pewter wares and grandfather clocks, but the less said about these the better (unless you're into high kitsch). The Dutch flower and plant industry is a booming business indeed, but foreign visitors can take home only certain certified bulbs. Nonetheless, there are plenty of creative ways to spend your euros, especially on imported, used, or antique goods.

What to Buy

Clogs, windmill souvenirs, and tulip bulbs are swell, but you might also consider things like contemporary art—a vibrant activity in this city of young artists (for art gallery listings on the Internet: www.akka.nl). Antiques—maps, prints, objects, books, furniture, genuine old pewter, porcelain, and jewelry—are a major attraction here. There are hundreds of reputable dealers, and you're sure to find something worth shipping or carrying home. Diamonds are still a big industry, and prices are competitive, but make sure you take your time to decide on a purchase: Many diamond-cutting houses give you a brisk tour, deposit you in the salesroom, and wait for the pressure to build. Porcelain from the royal factories at Delft and Makkum can be wonderful, but again, most of it is available in America. Sex-toy aficionados will find an embarrassment of riches (but be warned that some pornographic materials, especially films, cannot be imported into the States). Some of the world's best cigars and pipe tobacco are also available—smoke them on the spot or take a box home. Other products primarily or exclusively for immediate consumption include Dutch gin *(jenever)* and white wine (yes, it does exist), dozens of varieties of cheeses (Holland is Europe's number-one dairy products exporter), chocolate and pastries, coffee and tea, and hash and grass (in tiny quantities), if you're so inclined (don't even *think* about smuggling dope out of the country, however).

Target Zones

Go to **Damrak, Nieuwendijk,** and **Kalverstraat** in central Amsterdam, south of the station, for tacky gift stuff and mass-market clothes; nearby **Rokin** offers upscale fashion, tobacco, and antiques. The antiques dealers' quarter is on and around **Nieuwe Spiegelstraat,** near the Rijksmuseum, with almost 100 stores. Dozens of antiquarian bookshops are between central Spui and the royal palace on **Spuistraat, Singel,** and **Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal.** Dozens of international and Dutch designer boutiques, plus antique and porcelain dealers, are on **Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat** (P.C. Hooft to insiders) and adjoining streets near the Museum District in the south. Nearby, **Cornelis Schuytstraat** has been reborn as an upmarket Greenwich Village, with fashion, food, flowers, and collectibles. Small fashion boutiques and one-of-a-kind stores tend to be on side streets (now nicknamed "The Nine Streets") between canals in the **Grachtengordel** neighborhood. The entire **Jordaan** quarter, west of central Amsterdam, is a junk-and-oddity-lover's paradise. The VVV tourist bureau distributes a free detailed city map called "Shopping in Amsterdam"—worth getting for rabid shopaholics.

The Spirit of Amsterdam: Distiller Cees van Wees

Dynamic giant Cees van Wees stands about 7 feet tall, has a boyish haircut, and looks about 45. He's actually in his mid-60s, and attributes his health, bruising handshake, and booming voice to the regular intake of ***jenever****—Dutch gin. Van Wees—and his family—is Amsterdam's only jenever, eaux de vie, and liqueur maker, the scion of a spirited dynasty whose distillery, warehouse, and wholesale tasting room have perfumed the Jordaan neighborhood since 1782. He is also reputedly the only distiller in the Netherlands to use only natural, organic, homemade flavors and aromatics. Using old ceramic vats, oak barrels, and alembics, he distills everything from raspberries to apples, cinnamon to chocolate. Unfortunately, unless you're an importer, you can't visit the distillery, but you can sip and buy van Wees's extraordinary wares at the family proeflokaal (tasting house),* ***De Admiraal,*** *which is equipped with comfortable sofas and chairs to help you through the dozens of nectarious beverages on offer (tel 020/625-4334; Herengracht 319; see the Dining & Cafes chapter).*

Outdoor Markets

Amsterdam has as many markets as it does museums, and of the two you can guess which the locals prefer. Markets provide

alfresco shopping and free entertainment, and no one seems to mind the permanently lousy weather. The immense, mile-long **Albert Cuypmarkt** south of Singelgracht (on Albert Cuypstraat street; trams 4, 16, 24, 25; Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, closed Sun) is the city's biggest outdoor bazaar, happens 6 days a week, and is a great place to pick up Dutch and exotic food, cheap clothing, and ordinary household goods (though you'd be insane to buy and ship them home). Fresh veggies and lots of local color make the Jordaan's **Boerenmarkt,** or farmer's market (at Noorderkerkstraat and Westerstraat sts.; trams 3, 10; Sat 9am–4pm, till 3pm in winter), a nice place to wander on a lazy Saturday, especially since that's the day when organic-food peddlers take over the **Noordermarkt** (the name of a square but not itself a market, despite its name; trams 3, 10; Sat 10am–4pm); kids will love the Punch 'n' Judy show (called "Pantijn"), and aging hippies will flip over the whole-grain breads (and the occasional space cake). (On Mon 7:30am–1pm, the Noordermarkt is host to antiques and collectibles—mostly old junk, but great fun to sift through.) Saturday's **Lindengrachtmarkt** (Lindengracht; tram 3 to Nieuwe Willemsstraat; Sat 9am–4pm), a 5-minute walk south of the Noordermarkt, spreads out food, clothes, and sundry other goods. Another general market in the Jordaan, **Westermarkt** (Westerstraat; trams 3, 10; Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, closed Sun), is open 6 days a week.

The tourist office and all other guide writers insist that the famous daily flower market, the **Bloemenmarkt** (Singel at Muntplein/Koningsplein; trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25; Mon–Sat 8:30am–6pm, closed Sun), literally floats. In fact, almost all of it occupies a wide sidewalk or spreads across piers—not boats—in the Singel. But afloat or not, the flowers and plants are beautiful, the atmosphere jovial, and the prices ridiculously low on the things you can't take out of the country: cut flowers and live plants (see "Budding prospects," below).

You don't have to be a bibliophile to enjoy the **Boekenmarkt,** a book fair where used and antiquarian books, postcards, and prints are sold. There are three locations—near Amsterdam University (Oudemanhuispoort; trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25; Mon–Sat 11am–4pm); at Spui (trams 1, 2, 5; Fri 10am–6pm); and **Nieuwmarkt,** a square on the eastern edge of the Red-Light District (Metro to Nieuwmarkt; June–Sept Wed–Sat 9am–5pm). The collectible coins and stamps at the twice-weekly **Postzegelmarkt,** not far from Spui (Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 280; trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui; Wed and Sat 1–4pm),

draw pimply teenagers, overweight bachelors, and oldsters with grandkids in tow. The **Artmarkt 't Spui** (Spui; trams 1, 2, 5; March–Dec Sun 10am–6pm), a spring-through-fall Sunday market, and its counterpart, **Thorbecke Artmarkt,** near Rembrandtplein (Thorbeckeplein; trams 4, 9, 14; March–Dec Sun 10:30am–6pm), are where local Michelangelos and minor dealers hawk the occasional masterpiece, but mostly the kind of paintings that generally look best in motel lobbies.

Finally, there is something disappointingly orderly, clean, and touristy about the daily **Waterloopleinmarkt** flea market (Waterlooplein; trams 9, 14; Mon–Sat 9am–5pm), a vast affair occupying hundreds of shantytown stands in hideous Waterlooplein, behind city hall. But bargains—on antiquarian books, for example—can be unearthed among the mass-market rubbish and Third World souvenir elephants, whips, and beads.

Bargain Hunting

Sales, discounts, and wholesale prices to retail customers are an Amsterdam specialty—for locals. A *reklame* is an advertised sale; an *uitverkoop, aktie,* or *aanbieding* is a special sale; *alles moet weg* is a clearance sale. Unfortunately, visitors are not encouraged to participate in such savings—in the hope that they will pay full prices—and you'll hardly ever see advertisements in English. Seasonal discounts are largely the same as in America, with significant post-Christmas savings for all. The best sources for bargains are the Waterlooplein and De Looier flea markets and the outdoor markets of the Jordaan or Albert Cuypstraat (see "Outdoor Markets," above), where you can haggle and dicker like the best of them.

Trading with the Natives

The Dutch are canny shoppers, and will phone and shop around to find the best price. They go in for bargaining, but only with other natives and mostly at specific places, like outdoor markets, flea markets, and clearance sales. For visitors unable to wow natives with fluent Dutch, the price on the tag is what you'll pay. Finding flaws in goods and asking for a discount is a favorite trick among locals, but it probably isn't going to work for you. The salesperson will simply set the merchandise aside and return it to the manufacturer or importer (or call a friend and tell them to hurry over and buy it). Most stores displaying the "Duty-Free Shopping" logo will gladly ship your purchases home; others are less willing to do so, but can be

coaxed. Waiting your turn in line is essential, especially in crowded food stores, where you'll often have to take a ticket from a dispenser.

Hours of Business

Many stores and businesses are open 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday (no lunch closing). Galleries, antiques dealers, and one-of-a-kind stores open and shut when they please. Some stores are now also open on Sundays, from noon to 6pm, especially in designated tourist areas around Rembrandtplein, Leidseplein, Damrak and the Dam, the Red-Light District, and main shopping streets. Many stores are closed Monday mornings and are open late on Thursdays (usually until 9pm). The rest of the week, hours are usually 9am until 5pm, or 8pm.

Sales Tax

A 19% VAT, or value-added tax (called BTW in Dutch), is included in prices on consumer goods. Tax-free shopping for tourists is available at participating stores, but the mail-in refund (of 13½%) is only available when you spend 137 euros ($158) or more in one day at one store (see the Hotlines & Other Basics chapter or visit www.easytaxfree.com for more information).

The Lowdown

Budding prospects... Raising its head like a sunflower above the dozen other bloom vendors at the famous floating Bloemenmarkt (see "Outdoor Markets," above) in the Singel is **A.H. Abels en Zoon.** Here the displays are living Dutch miniatures worthy of the Rijksmuseum. You might think that the bulbs you choose are nobody's blooming business, but U.S. and Canadian customs won't let you bring them home if they don't have a "phytosanitary certificate," i.e., a clean bill of health. You can spend a lot of money on bulbs, so make sure the ones you buy are approved for export. You can buy health-certified bulbs at Abels en Zoon, but you'll have to ship them yourself from the post office. Just down the way are **M.M.C. Roozen** and **Aviflora,** equally good and willing to ship your U.S.-approved bulbs (from July–Sept only; the shipping also allows you to dodge the 19% VAT). **Laddrak,** less artful,

more mass market (check out the wooden clogs stuffed with tulip bulbs), is well stocked. They also export certified bulbs, which is the main reason to give them your business. Heads with green thumbs can buy marijuana starter kits from Laddrak (and most other flower-market stores); they should produce smokeable plants in 10 days or so. Beware, they're strictly illegal to export. **IVY** on Leidseplein and **Menno Kroon** on Cornelis Schuytstraat are the city's top florists and the places to go if you're itching for floral art. The bouquets and exotic plants are magnificently baroque, and beautiful people meet here lingering among the orchids. Edible flowers are the house specialty at **Jemi Bloemsierkunst,** a florist/floral art store in Amsterdam's oldest house, in the Red-Light District. Expect gorgeous—and delicious—bouquets and compositions.

Where you'll be pampered... At **Theresia P.C.,** you can admire the clothes Beatrix buys (yes, Theresia does dress the queen), and perhaps Theresia herself will be the one who escorts you over the polished marble of the ready-to-wear floor and up the spiral staircase to couture heaven. Across and down the street at **Edgar Vos,** matrons, mavens, and 45-ish businesswomen nod their approval as you don the pricey garden-party and socialite attire, while the stylish staff members listen and advise like the psychiatrists they really are. The master himself, **Panc Vergouw,** welcomes you into his tiny couture store near the Singel canal, and in no time you feel like a minor Grachtengordel socialite yourself, stunned by the magic of sequins and padded black-widow spider outfits suitable for noir society weddings. Across the street at **Dutch Design by Godelief,** Madame Godelief will help you into a white embroidered wedding dress or a tweedy suit.

Once you've outfitted yourself for serious spending, head to **Kolthoorn Kunst** antiques. You ring the doorbell of a 1662 Golden Bend mansion and are ushered into "the museum where every exhibit can become yours," as the company's slogan runs. The knowledgeable staff manage to make you feel like the owner of the place, and a much greater expert than they, as you gape at the museum-quality Old Dutch furniture, tapestries, and etchings (including several dozen by Rembrandt, for lease). Once you've made your purchase, stride up Rokin to **P.G.C. Hajenius** and

celebrate with a cigar in Amsterdam's "last elegant tobacco shop." As you stand on a thick red carpet under the huge bronze chandelier in the landmark 1915 interior, the genial, portly staff will open a dozen humidors, pouches, and canisters to find you the perfect smoke—possibly the extraordinary house Sumatra cigars, which you can savor in the new backroom cigar bar and mini–tobacco museum.

Everything under one roof... The city's biggest and best-loved department store is **De Bijenkorf** on the Dam, called the Beehive by locals. It's a cross between Macy's and Bloomingdale's, with perfume-soaked salesladies and a strait-laced, moneyed feel. Everything under the Dutch sun is there for the taking, if you aren't fazed by steep prices. **Metz & Co.,** with an exclusive address at Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat, is worth a visit for the view from the panoramic top-floor cafe. It's a favorite among well-heeled locals in the market for silk scarves, china, art glass, and the like. **Vroom & Dreesmann,** better known locally as V&D *(fay en day),* is a mass-market outfit on both sides of busy, tacky Kalverstraat that's handy for all the things you forgot to pack (rain gear, notebooks, toothpicks, 220V converters, etc.).

Diamonds are a girl's best friend... To believe most guidebooks and promotional brochures, Amsterdam is synonymous with diamonds. Diamond factory tours (see the Diversions chapter) are, in fact, among the city's biggest tourist attractions, but several other cities around the globe, including Antwerp, outrank Amsterdam as diamond-processing centers. No matter. The industry does trace its roots here to the late 1500s, prices are competitive, and there are many long-established, reputable dealers who gladly guarantee in writing the so-called four Cs: carat (weight), cut, color, and clarity. During World War II, when Nazi atrocities wiped out countless other Jewish diamond dynasties, the Van Moppes family escaped to Brazil, returning after the war to reopen what has become probably the biggest operation in town, **Van Moppes Diamonds.** Their claim to fame is having cut the smallest brilliant in the world, weighing .24 milligrams. The **Amsterdam Diamond Center** was created after the war by several big families, including seventh-generation kingpin

Paul Asscher, whose family spent 8 months cutting the world's biggest diamond—a 3,106-carat rough—into nine gems, including the famed Cullinan I (530 carats) and Cullinan II (317 carats). **Coster Diamonds** won renown in the 1930s by restyling the 186-carat Koh-i-Noor ("Mountain of Light") into the 108-carat centerpiece of the British royal crown (now in the Tower of London). **Gassan** and **Stoeltie Diamonds** round out the list of the city's top five dealers (there are many others); though smaller, their tours are just as good. Be aware that all the tours end in the salesroom, where you can be made to feel like the least you could do in return is buy a precious stone or two.

Club gear... Clubbing is big in Amsterdam, and hardcore party fiends outfit themselves at **Clubwear-House,** currently the place for the requisite sequins and feathers and impractical garb needed to stun bouncers into compliance. Buy the latest Dutch, American, British, and German designer duds or used party gear at this Spuistraat boutique, and get party fliers, concert tickets, DJ tapes, and insider's info from the hipsters at the cash register. Similar garments, plus wild hair styling, are on offer at nearby **Housewives on Fire,** a split-level new-and-used clubgear store and hair salon. After your hair-raising spree, you might even stand a chance of getting into iT or Escape (gee, what a privilege), provided, of course, that your shoes meet the bouncers' standards. When it comes to outrageous footwear—towering clogs, marvelously silly spike heels, and other un-PC items for the tootsies—try **Antonia by Yvette** or **Shoebaloo.** Further down the club-fashion food chain is **Chill Out,** on the top floor of De Bijenkorf department store. The best thing about Chill Out isn't the neobourgeois, teeny-bopper wear; it's the view. For leather, plastic, and S&M club garb, check out **Wasteland,** an aptly named boutique near Spui.

Royal fashions... Yes, everyone knows Amsterdam's worst-kept secret: **Theresia P.C.** dresses Queen Beatrix. Classic but fun, regal but discreet, conservative yet liberal, Theresia's clothes are a miracle of paradox and oxymoron. Even if you can't afford them, go to experience the majesty of her P.C. Hooftstraat premises. Apparently that other

P.C. Hooftstraat institution, **Edgar Vos,** has *not* had the privilege of a royal commission. Nonetheless, the reigning lady would doubtless approve of the colorful, classic, richly kitschy creations favored by rich Amsterdam businesswomen and socialites. The same crowd motors over to **Dutch Design by Godelief** for tweedy suits and Orientalist evening wear. In a pinch, both the women's and men's floors at **De Bijenkorf,** really the only full-fledged department store in town, would provide the kind of proper, upstanding, practical, yet noble clothes that would suit the royals. The feel is more English than Dutch at **De Jager Country Shop,** but in a sporty moment, Dutch princeling Willem Alexander might find De Jager's stylishly waterproof, laudably masculine clothes suitable for a damp country trot, a canal-boat ride, or a spot of urban cycling. Though there are no women's fashions per se, much of the rain gear and sports clothes, like Barbour raincoats, are unisex. **Metz & Co.,** on the corner of Keizersgracht and Leidsestraat, is the kind of perfumed, exclusive, and specialized department store where moneyed matrons shop for silk scarves and other accessories with aristocratic flair.

Wacky and one of a kind... You'd think a freewheeling cosmopolis and the gay capital of Europe would be teeming with them, but **De Condomerie** is the city's first and still its lone condoms-only boutique. To prove that there's more to a rubber than meets the eye, this Red-Light District specialist also sells condom souvenirs, condom T-shirts, edible condoms (try passionfruit), and condom samplers specially designed for anal penetration. Nearby, try the edibles at **Jemi Bloemsierkunst,** a floral art boutique where you munch on tulips and other botanical eye candy. **Trunk Interior Decorators** is an exercise in kitsch, popular with hipsters who've grown allergic to Philippe Starck and his legions of hyper-design Euro imitators. This store down an alley near Spui is crammed with wacky furnishings and objects, mostly from Morocco and India, including plastic Oriental carpets, suitcases made from recycled tin cans, and mock-silver teapots straight from the souk.

For nautical instruments, or anything you ever wanted for your canal boat, try **Andries de Jong,** the city's most handsome chandler's store, on Muntplein near the flower

market. The Maritime Museum's gift store is another great source for ship-related flotsam and jetsam (models, books, posters, accessories; see the Diversions chapter for business hours). At the **Brilmuseum** the spectacles are the spectacle: Every imaginable type of eyeglass frame and lens is on show and for sale at this unusual boutique-museum. No one in town can hold a candle to **Pontifex,** located between the Jordaan and the royal palace, which sells only candles, many handmade right there. The other side of this same U-shaped store, **Kramer** is where a Mr. Kramer runs his celebrated doll hospital, working wonders on ragged Raggedy Anns and beheaded Barbies. **Gone with the Wind** is a wonderland of sculptural mobiles and **Frozen Fountain** showcases plenty of impractical but irresistible objets by young Dutch designers. "Dive into the pool of fantasy," say the owners of the colorful Grachtengordel **Blue Gold Fish** gift store and gallery. There's no real rhyme or reason to the items for sale. They cover a wide range of ceramics, jewelry, household items (including colorful lamps in the "Aladdin's Corner"), and textiles, all of them running the stylistic gamut from kitsch to chic. Still, there's unity in diversity in the more-or-less fantastic design sensibility that goes into each piece.

Bags and beans... The Dutch, among the world's earliest and most active coffee and tea drinkers, continue to import, roast, and consume some of the world's finest aromatic caffeine sources. **Wijs & Zonen** has been at its current location—among the gay bars, smoking coffee stores, and grubby hotels of the Red-Light District—since 1828, and little of the interior has changed. You can mix and match a dozen kinds of coffee beans, or choose the house blends; tea comes in 24 loose-leaf varieties, as well as in packaged form. **Simon Levelt Koffie & Thee** is almost as old (1839) and just as good. This coffee-roasting and tea store on the edge of the Jordaan—remodeled in 1999—is still full of old coffee grinders and paraphernalia and offers dozens of fragrant blends. The other equally venerable Simon Levelt store, facing Centraal Station, is always packed. At age 140 in 2004, the Red-Light District's **Geels & Co.** is a relative newcomer on the coffee and tea scene, but it's right up there in quality and atmosphere and it has a charming coffee and tea museum on its second

floor. Try **Brandmeester's** for a contrast: This sleek, ultra-modern coffee-roasting store and tasting bar in glitzy Van Baerlestraat, around the corner from P.C. Hooftstraat, has palsy service to counter its hard-edged decor. Its American-style brownies would pass muster stateside.

Fashion forward... Carla V, a custom ladies' leather boutique run by irrepressible Carla Van der Vorst, is one of the big draws at the new Cornelis Schuytstraat shopping area. Choose the color and length of your posh lamé coat, guaranteed "as soft as your own skin." Skinflints should abstain. If silk is what turns you on, **McLennan's** kimonos, ties, scarves, and accessories are for you, artfully displayed in a chic silk-only boutique between the Jordaan and royal palace. At nearby **Van Ravenstein,** twin Dutch/Belgian designer boutiques, you're likely to bump into media stars, gallery owners, and the moneyed creative crowd of both sexes buying camelhair urban safari suits, vests made from zippers and embroidered evening wear, retro-hip felt or woolen garments, and discreet, darkly hip suits or pantsuits by Dries van Noten et al.

Everything you always wanted to know about sex... De Condomerie is the first place slavering sex tourists go in the Red-Light District to gawk at the window displays, much to the irritation of the staff of this exuberant condom boutique. You can pick up more than just flavored rubbers here; there are T-shirts, toys, key rings, and underwear decorated with or incorporating condoms. The Red-Light District isn't the only—or even the best—place to stock up on goodies made from rubber, leather, and the like. At **Female & Partners,** near the royal palace, you'll find all sorts of women's lingerie and charming sex articles for women who like women, women who like men, and those who like both. If the vibrators make you hesitant to enter this chic store, you can order your goodies by phone, mail, or over the Internet. Leather is the name of the hardcore game at **Vero-Over,** an extraordinary store way out by the Western Islands. Expect made-to-order leather couture items (the mind boggles), S&M accessories, pigskin pants, leather undies, plus all the usual off-the-rack leather paraphernalia fresh from the tannery. Closer in to the Center but just as outlandish is **Wasteland,** where, when it comes to getting into this boutique's club nights

and raves, "the decision of the bitch is final" (their words). Leather, uniforms, plastic, rubber, metal, cross-dress, and fetish-glam. What fun!

For foot fetishists... Finding Dutch-designed shoes is a challenge not always worth the trouble, but **Panara,** a pricey, chic store on P.C. Hooftstraat, sells seriously attractive, classic, and elegant footwear for well-heeled women, designed by Hans van Paridon but made in Italy. Trendies clatter over to **Antonia by Yvette,** a Grachtengordel boutique, for Dutch designer Lola Pagoda's fanciful shoes and clogs. At P.C. Hooftstraat's **Shoebaloo,** the decor may be by celebrated architect/artist/designer Borek Sipek, a Czech who has been in Holland for decades, but the Dutch and European women's footwear itself is surprisingly midmarket conventional.

Home designs... At **Frozen Fountain,** a stylish Grachtengordel showroom near Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, contemporary Dutch designer furniture and other objets by Marcel Wanders—and a dozen other fashioners of the gorgeous-but-impractical—draw the media crowd and beautiful people from surrounding canal houses and converted warehouses. At Peter van Kesteren's and Helene van Ruiten's **Galerie Binnen,** another name-dropper's Grachtengordel address, you'll find Italian, Dutch, and international interior and industrial design: furniture, vases, jewelry, and more. Less pricey but still chic are **Koot Light & Design** and **Koot Living,** a series of large stores favored by Jordaan yuppies seeking sleek halogen lamps by Dutch designers Gerard van den Berg or Anette van Edmund, or vaguely Art Deco furniture and housewares, including Italian tea kettles and flatware. Koot's chief competition is **Wonen 2000 International Design Centrum,** another set of stores distributed around several multistory buildings on the same busy Jordaan street. This international design store might be in New York except for the Dutch appliances and garden furniture.

The art scene... Once you've shown at **Galerie Paul Andriesse,** your reputation as an artist is pretty much made. Established avant-garde abstract and figurative artists, international and Dutch, make this Jordaan gallery the Leo Castelli of Amsterdam. Younger, hungrier talents show at

Adriaan ten Have's **Torch** gallery, a prime venue for progressive contemporary art. The occasional international name makes this hip Jordaan gallery *the* place to hobnob with the young, beautiful, and creative. Nearby at **De Praktijk,** Dirk Vermeulen, a dentist until the early 1990s, has converted his practice into a forum for contemporary Dutch artists and is the exclusive agent for the furniture art of the late monk Dom van der Laan. **Galerie Fons Welters** and **Galerie de Expeditie** are the quintessential Jordaan and Grachtengordel galleries, specializing in functional art and contemporary work by young Dutch and other artists. In a relatively new gallery area on the southern end of Lijnbaansgracht is **Galeriecomplex,** a grouping of six up-and-coming showrooms in adjoining buildings with connecting doors. Each gallery is different in style, taste, and quality, showing trendy Dutch and international contemporary works. Back in the Grachtengordel, **Galerie Binnen,** the world-class interior and industrial design gallery, showcases Dutch and European artists and artisans—its owners, Peter van Kesteren and Helene van Ruiten, are local art-world movers and shakers. Amsterdam's premier photography foundation, **Huis Marseille,** in the Grachtengordel, shows top international art photographers (see the Diversions chapter for more). ***Note:*** Most Amsterdam galleries are on the Internet (see www.akka.nl).

Very old things... At Rokin, near Muntplein, you'll come across two equally grand dealers for serious spenders. One, **Premsela & Hamburger,** is arguably Amsterdam's most reliable antique silver dealer. Poise and polish are the operative words here, with authentic silver baubles ranging from 19th-century English saltcellars to 18th-century tea strainers and Art Deco silverware. Next door, the suave staff at **V.O.F. Mathieu Hart,** discreet antiquarians since 1878, will help you fall in love with rare old prints, lithographs, and 18th-century delftware or grandfather clocks. **Kolthoorn Kunst** is an antiques store made to look and feel like a museum, and even the Rembrandt etchings are available for lease. Persnickety but knowledgeable, Martin Ex at **Ex Antiquiteiten** specializes in textile artworks (needlepoint) from the 17th through 19th centuries. His tiny Grachtengordel store is also crammed with priceless furniture and objects. As for the city's premier antiques

quarter, there are almost 100 reputable dealers in the **Nieuwe Speigelstraat** alone—far too many to list. Just stuff your wallet and stride out.

Kid stuff... When the kids clamor for their fair share of conspicuous consumption, head to **Magna Plaza,** a mall housed in the turn-of-the-century former Post & Telephone office facing the royal palace at the Dam; upstairs is Bam Bam, one of the city's chic-est kiddie-clothes boutiques. **De Looier Kunst & Antiekcentrum,** ostensibly an antiques and art market, is actually a covered flea market in the Jordaan where the kids will flip over the junk, especially the old Barbie dolls, teddy bears, pocket knives, Zippo lighters, and maybe even the Aretha Franklin 45s. There's a Renaissance-fair atmosphere on Saturdays at the organic food market at **Noordermarkt** in the Jordaan (see "Outdoor Markets," earlier in this chapter), where you can get all sorts of healthful treats for the children and entertain them with a lively Dutch version of the Punch 'n' Judy show. **Mechanisch Speelgoed,** an old-fashioned toy store just down the street from Noorderkerk, again in the Jordaan, is stuffed with wooden toys, traditional games, teddy bears, masks, and costumes. The countless colorful mobiles at **Gone with the Wind** are sure to lift your darling's heart. And should your sprout's favorite doll bust its arm or head in your travels, **Kramer,** a delightfully creepy doll hospital not far from the Jordaan, has a kind surgeon named Mr. Kramer ready to Cabbage-Patch things up.

Incredible edibles... Three of the city's friendliest and best-stocked deli and cheese stores, with all the cheeses, young and old, meats (smoked beef), and specialty foods you'll want for your picnics, are **Ron's** in the Jordaan near Westerkerk; **De Kaaskamer** on Runstraat, 5 minutes from the flower market; and **Loekie,** with two locations, one on Utrechtsestraat south of Rembrandtplein, the other on Prinsengracht near Leidestraat. A new, upscale catering and takeout joint with adjoining brasserie, **Van Dam** is *the* place for Dutch-French delicacies at premium prices. Chocoholics will appreciate **J.G. Beune,** an old (1882) and old-fashioned confectionery store west of Centraal Station. Don't miss the Amsterdammertjes—liquor- or chocolate-filled sweets suggestively modeled on the phallus-shaped

no-parking poles that line Amsterdam's streets. **Holtkamp** is a feast for both palate and eyes: The gorgeous Piet Kramer interior is a 1923 Art Deco masterwork; Cees and Petra Holtkamp's chocolates, pastries, and croquettes (there are 12 pastry chefs in the basement) are possibly the best in town. Amsterdam is famous for its salted licorice, known as *dropjes*—you'll either drop-dead love or hate it—and **The Natural Health Company** is an excellent source for it. This old store off Muntplein has a wide selection of the sticky stuff, an equally wide selection of cheesy delftware, plus a grab bag of homeopathic cures in case you get indigestion. The brainchild of larger-than-life *jenever* and liquor distiller Cees van Wees, De Admiraal (see the Dining & Cafes chapter)—a *proeflokaal* (tap house) on Herengracht—is a wonderful place to stock up on Amsterdam's only locally made gin. Tasty tulips with salmon or strawberries are on offer at **Jemi Bloemsierkunst,** a floral art boutique specializing in edible flowers.

Smokes... Tobacco smoking has been the national pastime since Holland's Golden Age. **P.G.C. Hajenius** is a city landmark on Rokin, a venerable tobacconist whose slogan is "the last of the elegant tobacco stores." Even if you're allergic to smoke and feel like kicking fat cats who puff away on smelly cigars, peek into the lovely 1915 interior: thick red carpet, marble and wood paneling, a huge bronze chandelier hanging from gilt beams. Dozens of wooden cigar boxes, humidors, and canisters of pipe tobacco hold some of the world's best tobaccos, including the celebrated hand-rolled house Sumatra cigars. The back rooms house a cigar bar, library, and mini–cigar museum. **J.N. Andringa Takaben** is the other serious tobacconist in town, and has been purveying top-quality products at Muntplein since 1902. The interior is simple compared to the competition's, but the handmade cigars and specially selected pipe tobaccos are just as good. If pipes are your thing, check out **Smokiana,** a pipe museum-store with tribal, antique, and ultramodern puffing equipment.

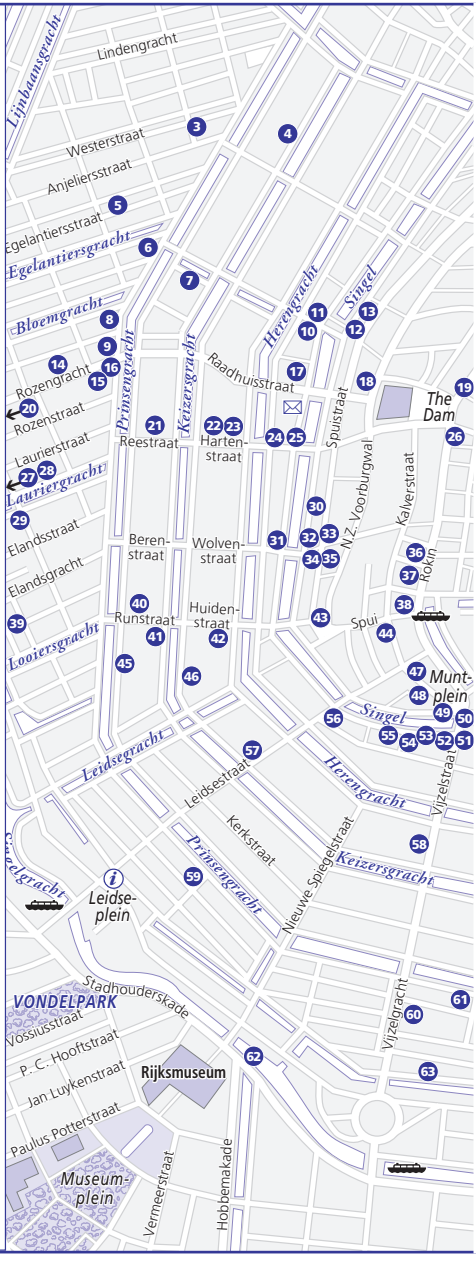
Book nooks... If you've forgotten to pack reading material, don't despair: Most Dutch bookstores carry books in English. The best source, however, is the **American Book Center,** a vast discount operation near Dam, with everything you'd find at home, and at reasonable prices.

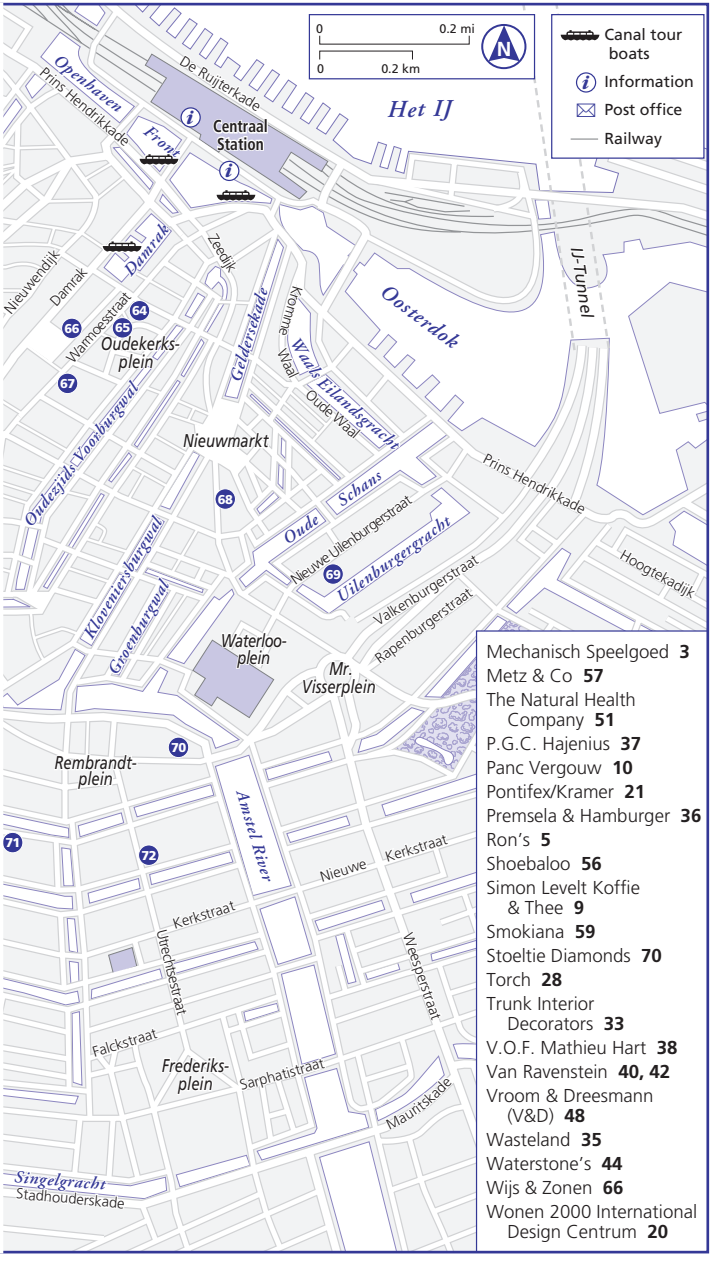
Athenaeum Boekhandel, at central Spui, is both a bookstore and an experience: Some local intellectuals seem to live here, eternally browsing the excellent selection of English-language books, novels, and magazines. **The English Bookshop** is a small, cozy Jordaan store favored by English expats; the mid- or highbrow novels and literature on its shelves reflect the chatty English owner's taste. The upscale British chain **Waterstone's** near Spui has a wide selection from U.K. and U.S. publishers, including literature on Amsterdam and Holland. Henk Brinkman, part-owner of atmospheric **Antiquariaat Brinkman,** is the leading light in Amsterdam's antique book trade. One of just a handful of booksellers in the 1950s, Brinkman has seen the trade flourish, turning Amsterdam into a European center for bibliophiles, historians, collectors, and researchers. Today, more than 125 stores specializing in everything from musical scores to medieval medical texts, early cookbooks, 18th-century travel guides, and everything else ever printed anywhere in the world are scattered around the center of town, but concentrated around Spui. Many of these books are in English. A detailed map of antiquarian and second-hand bookshops is on sale all over town, and from the publisher, DE KAN (Binnenkadijk 237; tel 020/627-5794). Check www.nwa.nl for a complete listing of booksellers. **Evenaar,** off Singel, is a travel-only specialist, with a good selection of new and used books in English.

Clogs, china, and kitsch... Dozens of souvenir boutiques around town sell delftware with a small "d" (i.e., junk). At **Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento,** near Westerkerk, you can buy the junk and the real thing, too: Royal Delftware with a capital *D.* Both the knockoffs and genuine articles come in sublimely ridiculous shapes: ceramic clogs, Christmas ornaments, contorted vases, and the like. **Gassan,** a diamond-polishing house, has a Royal Delftware painting workshop and boutique. You're just gonna love the high-camp atmosphere at **De Klompenboer,** Amsterdam's celebrated cloggery, just a few hundred yards south of Nieuwmarkt; live chickens peck at the wood shavings from the *klompen* (clogs) made by Ye Olde Shoemaker, and a woman in "traditional" costume paints these works of contemporary art before your very eyes. Over at the Bloemenmarkt, **Laddrak** stuffs brightly painted wooden clogs with U.S.-certified tulip bulbs.

Map 15: Central Amsterdam Shopping

- A.H. Abels en Zoon **55**
- American Book Center **47**
- Amsterdam Diamond Center **26**
- Andries de Jong **49**
- Antiquariaat Brinkman **32**
- Antonia by Yvette **24**
- Athenaeum Boekhandel **43**
- Aviflora **54**
- Blue Gold Fish **15**
- Brilmuseum **34**
- Chill Out **19**
- Clubwear-House **30**
- De Bijenkorf/Chill Out **19**
- De Condomerie **67**
- De Jager Country Shop **23**
- De Kaaskamer **41**
- De Klompenboer **68**
- De Looier Kunst & Antiekcentrum **39**
- De Praktijk **27**
- Dutch Design by Godelief **11**
- The English Bookshop **29**
- Evenaar **31**
- Ex Antiquiteiten **25**
- Female & Partners **13**
- Frozen Fountain **45**
- Galerie Binnen **4**
- Galeriecomplex **63**
- Galerie de Expeditie **7**
- Galerie Fons Welters **14**
- Galerie Paul Andriesse **6**
- Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento **8**
- Gassan **69**
- Geels & Co **64**
- Gone With the Wind **58**
- Holtkamp **60**
- Housewives on Fire **12**
- Huis Marseille **46**
- IVY **62**
- Jemi Bloemsierkunst **65**
- J.N. Andringa Takaben **50**
- Kolthoorn Kunst **71**
- Koot Light & Design **17**
- Koot Living **16**
- Laddrak **53**
- Loekie **61, 72**
- M.M.C. Roozen **52**
- Magna Plaza **18**
- McLennan's **22**





Mechanisch Speelgoed **3**
Metz & Co **57**
The Natural Health Company **51**
P.G.C. Hajenius **37**
Panc Vergouw **10**
Pontifex/Kramer **21**
Premsela & Hamburger **36**
Ron's **5**
Shoebaloo **56**
Simon Levelt Koffie & Thee **9**
Smokiana **59**
Stoeltie Diamonds **70**
Torch **28**
Trunk Interior Decorators **33**
V.O.F. Mathieu Hart **38**
Van Ravenstein **40, 42**
Vroom & Dreesmann (V&D) **48**
Wasteland **35**
Waterstone's **44**
Wijs & Zonen **66**
Wonen 2000 International Design Centrum **20**

Map 16: Southern Amsterdam Shopping

Brandmeester's **73**
Carla V **81**
Coster Diamonds **78**
Edgar Vos **74**
Menno Kroon **79**
Panara **75**
Shoebaloo **76**
Theresia P.C. **77**
Van Dam **80**
Van Moppes Diamonds **82**

SHOPPING

Nieuwe Spiegelstraat
Singelgracht
Halsstraat
Frans
Ruysdaelkade
Boerenwetering
Hobbemakade
Stadhouderskade
Rijksmuseum
Hobbemakade
Pieter de Hoochstraat
Horststraat
Vermeerstraat
Museumplein
Paulus Potterstraat
Jan Luykenstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Willem Witsenstraat
Frans van Ruijsdaelstraat
Nicolaes Maesstraat
Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat
Jacob Obrechtstraat
Reijner Vinkeleskade
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Jan van Eijckstraat
Gerrit v. Veenstraat
Ruebensstraat
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Emmastraat
De Lairessestraat
Jozef Israelskade
Amstelkade
Churchillaan
Amstel Kanaal
Overtoom
Haringvlietstraat
Wielingenstraat
Helperman
Heijermansweg
Dieperbrockstraat
Stadionweg
Richard Wagnerstraat
Schubert straat
Beethovenstraat
BEATRIXPARK
Stadionkade
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Ringwegzuid
Jan van Goyenkade
Apollolaan
Titiaanstraat
Olympiaplein
SPORTPARK OLYMPIAPLEIN
Olympiaplein
Stadionweg
Watteaustr
Parnassusweg
Lennepkanaal
Hemsterhuisstraat
Vondelstraat
VONDELPARK
Van Eedenstraat
Willemskade
Van Beethovenstraat
Van Limburg Stirumstraat
Jorislaan
Van Baerlestraat
Museumplein
Jan Luykenstraat
Paulus Potterstraat
Rijksmuseum
Stadhouderskade
Singelgracht
Ruysdaelkade
Boerenwetering
Hobbemakade
Amstel Kanaal
Overtoom
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Ringwegzuid
Ringwegzuid
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Ruebensstraat
Beethovenstraat
Schubert straat
Richard Wagnerstraat
Stadionweg
Dieperbrockstraat
Heijermansweg
Overtoom
Haringvlietstraat
Wielingenstraat
Churchillaan
Amstelkade
Jozef Israelskade
Centrumbaan
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat
Halsstraat
Frans
Ruysdaelkade
Hobbemakade
Pieter de Hoochstraat
Horststraat
Vermeerstraat
Willem Witsenstraat
Frans van Ruijsdaelstraat
Nicolaes Maesstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Museumplein
Paulus Potterstraat
Jan Luykenstraat
Rijksmuseum
Stadhouderskade
Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat
Jacob Obrechtstraat
Reijner Vinkeleskade
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Jan van Eijckstraat
Gerrit v. Veenstraat
Ruebensstraat
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Emmastraat
De Lairessestraat
Jorislaan
Van Limburg Stirumstraat
Van Beethovenstraat
Willemskade
Van Eedenstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Hemsterhuisstraat
Vondelstraat
VONDELPARK
Lennepkanaal
Jan van Goyenkade
Titiaanstraat
Olympiaplein
SPORTPARK OLYMPIAPLEIN
Olympiaplein
Stadionweg
Watteaustr
Parnassusweg
BEATRIXPARK
Schubert straat
Beethovenstraat
Stadionkade
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Ringwegzuid
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Amstel Kanaal
Overtoom
Amstelkade
Churchillaan
Wielingenstraat
Haringvlietstraat
Heijermansweg
Helperman
Dieperbrockstraat
Richard Wagnerstraat
Stadionweg
Centrumbaan
Jozef Israelskade
Amstelkade
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Wielingenstraat
Haringvlietstraat
Heijermansweg
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Richard Wagnerstraat
Stadionweg
Schubert straat
Beethovenstraat
Stadionkade
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Ringwegzuid
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Amstel Kanaal
Overtoom

The Index

A.H. Abels en Zoon (p. 178) CANAL BELT Fragrant flower and plant store in the floating market. Health-certified bulbs, no shipping.... *Tel 020/622-7441. Singel 490–494 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 55.

American Book Center (p. 188) CENTER Multistory discount bookstore.... *Tel 020/625-5537. www.abc.nl. Kalverstraat 185 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–8pm, Thurs 10am–10pm, Sun 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 47.

Amsterdam Diamond Center (p. 180) CENTER Serious gem complex on the Dam founded by seventh-generation diamond kingpin Paul Asscher.... *Tel 020/624-5787. Rokin 1–5 at the Dam. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 10am–6pm, Thurs 7–8:30pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 26.

Andries de Jong (p. 182) REMBRANDTPLEIN Amsterdam yachtsmen drop anchor at this pricey chandler's store.... *Tel 020/624-5251. www.andriesdejong.nl. Muntplein 8. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 49.

Antiquariaat Brinkman (p. 189) CANAL BELT Leading antique bookstore.... *Tel 020/623-8353. www.nvva.nl/brinkman. Singel 319 at Oude Spiegelstraat (across the canal). Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Sat 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 32.

Antonia by Yvette (p. 181, 185) CANAL BELT Grachtengordel boutique for wild or merely hip Dutch shoes and clogs.... *Tel 020/627-2433. www.antoniabyyvette.nl. Gasthuismolensteeg 6, 12, and 16 at Singel. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Sat 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 24.

Athenaeum Boekhandel (p. 189) CENTER The ultimate Amsterdam bookstore, at central Spui, with a wide selection of books, novels, and magazines in English.... *Tel 020/622-3933.*

www.athenaeum.nl. Spui 14–16. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Wed and Sat 9:30am–6pm, Thurs 9:30am–9pm, Sun noon–5:30pm.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 43.

Aviflora (p. 178) CANAL BELT One of the few flower market stores with U.S.-certified bulbs and Internet ordering.... *Tel 020/622-6592. www.aviflora.nl. Singel 522 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 54.

Blue Gold Fish (p. 183) CANAL BELT A gift store with a taste for fantasy and a wide-ranging collection.... *Tel 020/623-3134. Rozengracht 17 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Sat 11:30am–6:30pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 15.

Brandmeester's (p. 184) MUSEUM DISTRICT Trendy, updated coffee-roasting store.... *Tel 020/675-7888. Van Baerlestraat 13 at Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat. Open Mon–Sat 9am–6pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 73.

Brilmuseum (p. 183) CENTER Museum-store for eyeglass aficionados.... *Tel 020/421-2414. www.brilmuseumamsterdam.nl. Gasthuismolensteeg 7 at Sigel. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 34.

Carla V (p. 184) OLD SOUTH Dutch designer Carla van der Vorst's new leather clothing boutique: coats, skirts, bags, and belts. You choose the style and length; Carla dyes the duds whatever color you like.... *Tel 020/672-0404. Cornelis Schuytstraat 45 at Willemsparkweg. Tram 2 to Cornelis Schuytstraat. Open Tues–Sat 11am–5:30pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 81.

Chill Out See De Bijenkorf.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 19.

Clubwear-House (p. 181) CENTER Clubwear, DJ tapes, tickets, and club info.... *Tel 020/622-8766. www.clubwearhouse.nl. Spuistraat 242 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Tues–Sat 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 30.

Coster Diamonds (p. 181) MUSEUM DISTRICT One of the biggest, glitziest diamond operations in town.... *Tel 020/305-5555. www.costerdiamonds.com. Paulus Potterstraat 2–6 at Museum District. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat. Open daily 9am–5pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 78.

De Bijenkorf/Chill Out (p. 180, 182) CENTER "The Beehive," Amsterdam's biggest and best department store.... *Tel 020/621-8080. Dam 1. Trams 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam.*

Open Mon–Wed and Sat 10am–6pm, Thurs 10am–9pm, Sun noon–6pm.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 19.

De Condomerie (p. 182, 184) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT The city's first condom boutique.... *Tel 020/627-4174. www.condomerie.com. Warmoesstraat 141 at Beursplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Sat 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 67.

De Jager Country Shop (p. 182) CANAL BELT Clothes and accessories for the shooting, fishing, and riding set in a proper little store near the flower market.... *Tel 020/624-7172. www.countryshop-dejager.nl. Herengracht 230 at Hartenstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Koningsplein. Open Tues–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 23.

De Kaaskamer (p. 187) CANAL BELT Possibly Amsterdam's best cheese store, with deli delights to boot. Will vacuum-pack and courier cheese anywhere.... *Tel 020/623-3483. Runstraat 7 at Keizersgracht. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open daily 9am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 41.

De Klompenboer (p. 189) JEWISH QUARTER Kitschy tourist magnet store for clogs and other souvenirs.... *Tel 020/623-0632. Sint-Antoniesbreestraat 51 at Nieuwmarkt. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open mid-April to mid-Sept daily 10am–9pm; mid-Sept to mid-April daily 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 68.

De Looier Kunst & Antiekcentrum (p. 187) JORDAAN Tacky but irresistible covered flea market.... *Tel 020/624-9038. www.looier.nl. Elandsgracht 109 at Lijnbaansgracht. Tram 6, 7, 10, 17 to Elandsgracht. Open Sat–Wed 11am–5pm, Thurs 11am–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 39.

De Praktijk (p. 186) JORDAAN Gallery for contemporary Dutch artists; exclusive agents for Dom van der Laan's extraordinary furniture.... *Tel 020/639-1316. Lauriergracht 96 at Lijnbaansgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open Wed–Sat noon–6pm and by appointment.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 27.

Dutch Design by Godelief (p. 179, 182) CANAL BELT The sign says NOT IN PARIS, MILAN OR LONDON. I wonder why.... Tweedy suits, embroidered wedding dresses, and Orientalist evening wear for 45-ish businesswomen and socialites.... *Tel 020/623-2638. www.godelief.nl. Singel 182 at Oude Leliestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open Tues–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 11.

Edgar Vos (p. 179, 182) MUSEUM DISTRICT Garden-party and socialite attire for 40-ish businesswomen and country-clubbers.... *Tel 020/662-6336. www.edgarvos.nl. Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat*

136 at Van Baerlestraat. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat. Open Sun–Mon noon–5pm, Tues–Sat 9am–6pm.

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 74.

The English Bookshop **(p. 189)** JORDAAN Friendly, intimate store specializing in British and American quality literature and travel books.... *Tel 020/626-4230. www.englishbookshop.nl. Lauriergracht 71 at Hazenstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open Tues–Fri 1–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 29.

Evenaar **(p. 189)** CANAL BELT Small travel-only bookstore just off Singel. Good selection of new and used books in English.... *Tel 020/624-6289. Singel 348 at Oude Spiegelstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Spui. Open Mon–Fri noon–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 31.

Ex Antiquiteiten **(p. 186)** CANAL BELT Tiny Grachtengordel antiques store selling rare needlepoint art, furniture, and objects.... *Tel 020/625-5180. Gasthuismolensteeg 8 at Singel. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open Thurs–Sat 11am–6pm, or by appointment.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 25.

Female & Partners **(p. 184)** CENTER Chic retail and mail-order boutique for "sex articles for women"—lingerie, dildos, and other imaginative toys.... *Tel 020/620-9152. www.femaleandpartners.nl. Spuistraat 100 at Nieuwe Sparpotsteeg. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to the Dam. Open Tues–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun–Mon 1–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 13.

Frozen Fountain **(p. 183, 185)** CANAL BELT Dutch designer furniture and objets in a trendy showroom.... *Tel 020/622-9375. Prinsengracht 629 at Leidsegracht. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Prinsengracht. Open Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat noon–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 45.

Galerie Binnen **(p. 185, 186)** CANAL BELT International interior and industrial design fills this serious Grachtengordel gallery.... *Tel 020/625-9603. Keizersgracht 82 at Prinsenstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to Nieuwezijds Kolk. Open Tues–Sat noon–6pm, 1st Sun of month 2–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 4.

Galeriecomplex **(p. 186)** CENTER Six galleries under the same roof (the Living Room, Lumentravo, Metis NI, Akinci, Van Wijngaarden, Vous etes ici), showing Dutch contemporary works.... *Tel 020/638-9863. Lijnbaansgracht 314–318 at Weteringcircuit. Trams 6, 7, 10, 16, 24, 25 to Weteringcircuit. Open Wed–Sat and 1st Sun of month 1–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 63.

Galerie de Expeditie (p. 186) CANAL BELT Grachtengordel contemporary art gallery with up-and-coming talents.... *Tel 020/620-4758. www.de-expeditie.com. Leliegracht 47 at Keizersgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Tues–Sat 10:30am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 7.

Galerie Fons Welters (p. 186) JORDAAN Hip gallery showing functional and avant-garde art and top contemporary work by young artists.... *Tel 020/623-3046. Bloemstraat 140 at Rozengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open Wed–Sat 1–6pm, 1st Sun of month 2–5pm. Closed mid-July to early Sept.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 14.

Galerie Paul Andriesse (p. 185) CANAL BELT Top gallery on the edge of the Jordaan for established avant-garde artists.... *Tel 020/623-6237. Prinsengracht 116 at Egelantiersgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Tues–Fri 11am–1pm and 2–6pm, Sat 2–6pm, 1st Sun of month 2–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 6.

Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento (p. 189) CANAL BELT Hand-painted Delftware of every conceivable type from De Porcelyne Fles is sold in this nondescript but well-stocked emporium in the shadow of Westerkerk.... *Tel 020/622-7509. Prinsengracht 170 at Bloemstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Sat 9am–6pm, Sun 10am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 8.

Gassan (p. 181, 189) JEWISH QUARTER One of the city's top five diamond houses. Good tours; also sells Royal Delftware.... *Tel 020/622-5333. Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173–175 at Jodenbreestraat. Trams 9, 14 to Waterlooplein. Open daily 9am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 69.

Geels & Co. (p. 183) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT A coffee-roasting and tea-importing establishment in the Red-Light District since 1864. Houses a tiny coffee and tea museum.... *Tel 020/624-0683. www.geels.nl. Warmoesstraat 67 at Oude Brugsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Sat 9:30am–6pm; museum open Sat 2–4pm, admission free.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 64.

Gone With the Wind (p. 183, 187) CENTER Nearly 100 mobiles, plus traditional toys.... *Tel 020/423-0230. www.gonewind-mobiles.com. Vijzelstraat 22 at Herengracht. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Herengracht. Open Tues–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 58.

Holtkamp (p. 188) CENTER Homemade chocolates, pastries, and croquettes spread out in a gorgeous 1923 Art Deco interior.... *Tel 020/624-8757. Vijzelgracht 15 at Prinsengracht. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Prinsengracht. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 60.

Housewives on Fire (p. 181) CENTER Clubwear and hair-styling for serious house fiends.... *Tel 020/622-9818. Spuistraat 102 at Nieuwe Sparpotsteeg. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to the Dam. Open Fri–Wed 10am–7pm, Thurs 10am–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 12.

Huis Marseille (p. 186) CANAL BELT The city's top photo exhibitions, at a nonprofit foundation.... *Tel 020/531-8989. www.huismarseille.nl. Keizersgracht 401 at Leidsegracht. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Keizersgracht. Open Tues–Sun 11am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 46.

IVY (p. 179) LEIDSEPLEIN Creative, postmodern-baroque florist across from the Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American.... *Tel 020/623-6561. Leidseplein 35. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 62.

Jemi Bloemsierkunst (p. 179, 182, 188) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Gorgeous bouquets, exotic plants, and the house specialty—edible flowers. In a historic landmark building in the Red-Light District.... *Tel 020/625-6034. Warmoesstraat 83A at Oude Brugsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 65.

J.G. Beune (p. 187) WEST Old-fashioned chocolate store and bakery west of Central Station.... *Tel 020/624-8356. Haarlemmerdijk 156–158 Haarlemmerplein. Tram 3 and buses 18, 22 to Haarlemmerplein. Open Mon–Sat 8am–6pm.*

See Map 14 on p. 172, bullet 2.

J.N. Andringa Tabaken (p. 188) CENTER A simple store founded in 1902, with excellent handmade cigars and pipe tobacco. Will ship anywhere.... *Tel 020/623-2836. Reguliersbreestraat 2 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 50.

Kolthoorn Kunst (p. 179, 186) CANAL BELT An antiques showroom in a 17th-century mansion with some of the city's finest Old Dutch furniture, Delftware, tapestries, and etchings.... *Tel 020/622-1010. Herengracht 518 at Vijzelstraat. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Herengracht. Open by appointment only.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 71.

Koot Light & Design (p. 185) CENTER Two hip home-design boutiques west of the Dam.... *Tel 020/626-4830. Raadhuisstraat 52–54 & 55 at Singel. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–6pm, Thurs 10am–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 17.

Koot Living (p. 185) CENTER More vaguely Art Deco Dutch furnishings.... *Tel 020/625-0770. Rozengracht 10. Trams 6, 13,*

14, 17 to Westermarkt or Lijnbaansgracht. Open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–6pm, Thurs 10am–9pm.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 16.

Laddrak **(p. 178, 189)** CANAL BELT A Bloemenmarkt florist who will export your health-certified bulbs for you.... *Tel 020/625-4842. Singel 548 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 53.

Loekie **(p. 187)** CENTER AND CANAL BELT Two delis stuffed with delicious Dutch cheeses and specialty meats.... *Tel 020/624-3740. Utrechtsestraat 57 at Keizersgracht. Tram 4 to Keizersgracht. Open Mon–Tues and Thurs–Sat 9–5, Wed 9–1. Tel 020/624-4300. Prinsengracht 705 at Leidsestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Prinsengracht. Open Mon–Tues and Thurs–Sat 9am–5pm, Wed 9am–1pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 61, 72.

Magna Plaza **(p. 187)** CENTER Upscale five-level mall in the turn-of-the-century Post & Telephone office building facing the royal palace.... *Tel 020/626-9199. Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 182 at the Dam. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17 to the Dam. Open daily 9am–7pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 18.

McLennan's **(p. 184)** CANAL BELT Pure silk, by the yard or snipped into kimonos, ties, scarves, and other accessories.... *Tel 020/622-7693. Hartenstraat 22 at Herengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 22.

Mechanisch Speelgoed **(p. 187)** JORDAAN Old-fashioned toy store.... *Tel 020/638-1680. Westerstraat 67 at Violettenstraat. Trams 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Open Mon–Tues and Thurs–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 3.

Menno Kroon **(p. 179)** OLD SOUTH Hip new floral arts boutique where the beautiful people spend their euros on gorgeous blooms.... *Tel 020/679-1950. Cornelis Schuytstraat 11 at Willemsparkweg. Tram 2 to Cornelis Schuytstraat. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 79.

Metz & Co. **(p. 180, 182)** CANAL BELT Exclusive Grachtengordel department store. Panoramic cafe on top floor.... *Tel 020/624-8810. Keizersgracht 455 at Leidsestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Keizersgracht. Open Mon 11am–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 9:30am–6pm, Thurs 9:30am–9pm, Sun noon–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 57.

M.M.C. Roozen **(p. 178)** CENTER Good source of U.S.-approved bulbs. At flower market.... *Tel 020/625-7176. Singel 496 at*

Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 52.

The Natural Health Company (p. 188) CENTER Famous salted licorice, homeopathic cures, and tacky souvenirs are stuffed into this atmospheric store.... *Tel 020/624-4533. Vijzelstraat 1 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon–Sat 9am–6pm, Sun 1–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 51.

Panara (p. 185) MUSEUM DISTRICT Elegant yet hip Dutch-designed shoes for women 30 and over.... *Tel 020/622-1908. Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat 124 at Van Baerlestraat. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 9am–6pm, Thurs 9am–9pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 75.

Panc Vergouw (p. 179) CANAL BELT Small couture store where businesswomen and socialites order sequined silks or more conservative, tailored woolens and cottons.... *Tel 020/428-0655. Oude Leliestraat 1 at Singel. Trams, 1, 2, 5, 6, 13, 17 to the Dam. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Sat 9am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 10.

P.G.C. Hajenius (p. 179, 188) CENTER Elegant 1915 tobacco store, cigar bar, and mini-museum. Will ship anywhere.... *Tel 020/623-7494. www.hajenius.com. Rokin 96 at Spui. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 9:30am–6pm, Thurs 9:30am–9pm, Sun noon–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 37.

Pontifex/Kramer (p. 183, 187) CANAL BELT Two stores in one: candles galore at Pontifex; toy repair at Mr. Kramer's doll hospital.... *Tel 020/626-5274. Reestraat 18–20 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 21.

Premsela & Hamburger (p. 186) CENTER Possibly the city's best source for buying or restoring antique or contemporary silver.... *Tel 020/627-5454. www.premsela.com. Rokin 98 at Spui. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Open Mon–Fri 9:30am–5:30pm, Sun noon–5pm, or by appointment.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 36.

Ron's (p. 187) JORDAAN Dutch deli and cheese store.... *Tel 020/624-8802. Tweede Tuindwarsstraat 3 at Tuinstraat. Trams 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Open Mon–Sat 9am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 5.

Shoebaloo (p. 181, 185) MUSEUM DISTRICT AND CENTER Two chic boutiques, selling women's footwear that's not as outrageous as you'd expect from the decor.... *Tel 020/671-2210. Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat 80. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat.*

Open Mon noon–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–6pm, Thurs 10am–9pm, Sun 1–6pm. Tel 020/626-7993. Koningsplein 7 at Herengracht. Open Mon noon–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–6pm, Thurs 10am–9pm, Sun 1–6pm.

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 56.

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 76.

Simon Levelt Koffie & Thee (p. 183) CANAL BELT An 1839 coffee-roasting and tea store in the shadow of the Westerkerk has expanded, with three other locations, but the same great coffee.... *Tel 020/624-0823. www.simonlevelt.nl. Prinsengracht 180 at Rozenstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm. Tel 020/489-5963. Kinkerstraat 109 at Tollensstraat. Trams 7, 17 to Ten Katestraat. Open Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm. Tel 020/400-4060. Ferdinand Bolstraat 154 at Van Ostadestraat. Trams 3 to Ferdinand Bolstraat; 12, 16, 24, 25 to Ceintuurbaan. Open Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm. Tel 020/428-5887. Stationsplein 15 inside Centraal Station. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25 and Metro to Centraal Station. Open Mon–Fri 8am–8pm, Sat 9am–8pm, Sun noon–7pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 9.

Smokiana (p. 188) CANAL BELT Pipe museum and store with pipes primitive to postmodern.... *Tel 020/421-1779. Prinsengracht 488 at Leidsestraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Prinsengracht. Open Wed–Sat noon–6pm (at other times by appointment).*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 59.

Stoeltie Diamonds (p. 181) REMBRANDTPLEIN Small, old, reliable diamond dealer near Rembrandtplein.... *Tel 020/623-7601. Wagenstraat 13–17 at Amstelstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open daily 8:30am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 70.

Theresia P.C. (p. 179, 181) MUSEUM DISTRICT Luxurious P.C. boutique, where ready-to-wear (downstairs) ranges from 500€–5,000€ ($575–$5,750) for a dress.... *Tel 020/679-6225. Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat 55. Trams 2, 5 to Hobbemastraat. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 77.

Torch (p. 186) JORDAAN Progressive contemporary art, theme shows, and the occasional international name give this gallery its hipster cachet.... *Tel 020/626-0284. Lauriergracht 94 at Lijnbaansgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open Thurs–Sat 2–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 28.

Trunk Interior Decorators (p. 182) CENTER This antidesign store in an alley near Spui has plenty of inexpensive wacky imports.... *Tel 020/638-7095. Rosmarijnsteeg 12 at Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Spui. Tues–Sun 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 33.

Van Dam (p. 187) OLD SOUTH Franco-Dutch caterer with great takeout at regal rates. Also a hip brasserie.... *Tel 020/670-6570. Cornelis Schuytstraat 8–10 at Willemsparkweg. Tram 2 to Cornelis Schuytstraat. Open daily noon–7pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 80.

Van Moppes Diamonds (p. 180) OLD SOUTH The biggest diamond operation in town. Draws crowds of tourists.... *Tel 020/676-1242. www.moppesdiamonds.com. Albert Cuypstraat 2–6 at Ruysdaelkade. Trams 16, 24, 25 to Albert Cuypstraat. Open daily 8:45am–5:45pm.*

See Map 16 on p. 192, bullet 82.

Van Ravenstein (p. 184) CANAL BELT Upscale Dutch/Belgian designer boutiques in the Grachtengordel, for women and men; good for handmade sweaters, leather pants, and two-piece suits.... *Tel 020/639-0067. Runstraat 18–22 and Huidenstraat 27 at Keizersgracht. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Spui. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri 11am–6pm, Thurs 11am–9pm, Sat 11am–5pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullets 40, 42.

Vero-Over (p. 184) WESTERN DOCKS Off-the-rack and made-to-order leather and rubber couture, mostly for the hardcore S&M crowd.... *Tel 020/625-1989. Oostzaanstraat 60 at Zaanstraat. Bus 22 to Oostzaanstraat. Open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–7pm, Thurs 11am–9pm.*

See Map 14 on p. 172, bullet 1.

V.O.F. Mathieu Hart (p. 186) CENTER Polished century-old fourth-generation antiques dealer near Spui.... *Tel 020/623-1658. Rokin 122 at Spui. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Open Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 38.

Vroom & Dreesmann (V&D) (p. 180) CENTER Vast, mid- to down-market department store scattered in several buildings on Kalverstraat.... *Tel 020/622-0171. Kalverstraat 201–221 at Muntplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Muntplein. Open Mon 11am–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 9am–6pm, Thurs 9am–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 48.

Wasteland (p. 181, 184) CENTER Kinky latex clubwear, plus all sorts of S&M "toys." Don't bring the kids.... *Tel 061/557-1306. Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 332 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Tues–Wed 1–6pm, Thurs–Sun 1–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 35.

Waterstone's (p. 189) CENTER British chain bookshop near Spui with a wide variety of English and American books.... *Tel 020/638-3821. Kalverstraat 152 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5, to Spui. Open Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 9am–6pm, Thurs 9am–9pm, Sun–Mon 11am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 44.

Wijs & Zonen **(p. 183)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT One of Amsterdam's oldest (1828) and best coffee-roasting and tea-importing establishments, stuck in the seedy Red-Light District.... *Tel 020/624-0436. Warmoesstraat 102 at Wijde Kerksteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 10am–6pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 66.

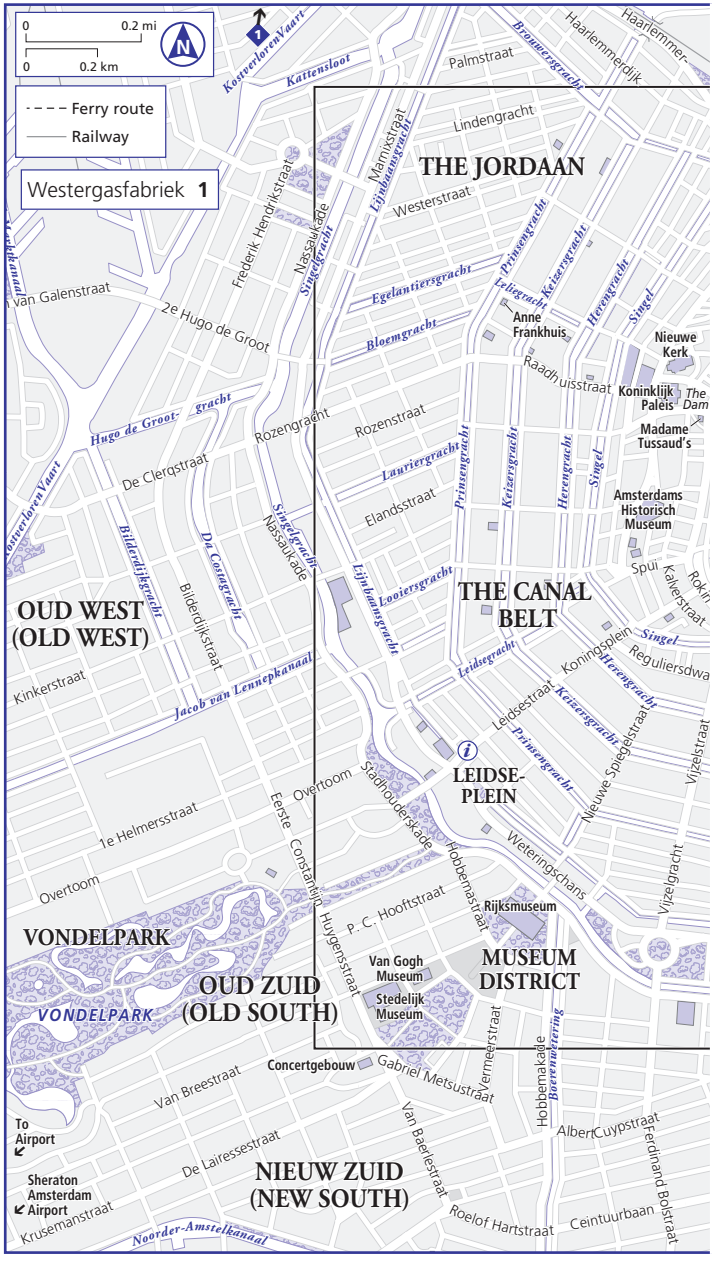
Wonen 2000 International Design Centrum **(p. 185)** JORDAAN Dutch and international designer home furnishings distributed around several multistory buildings.... *Tel 020/521-8710. Rozengracht 202–210 and 215–223 at Lijnbaansgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open Mon 1–6pm, Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 9am–6pm, Thurs 9am–9pm.*

See Map 15 on p. 190, bullet 20.

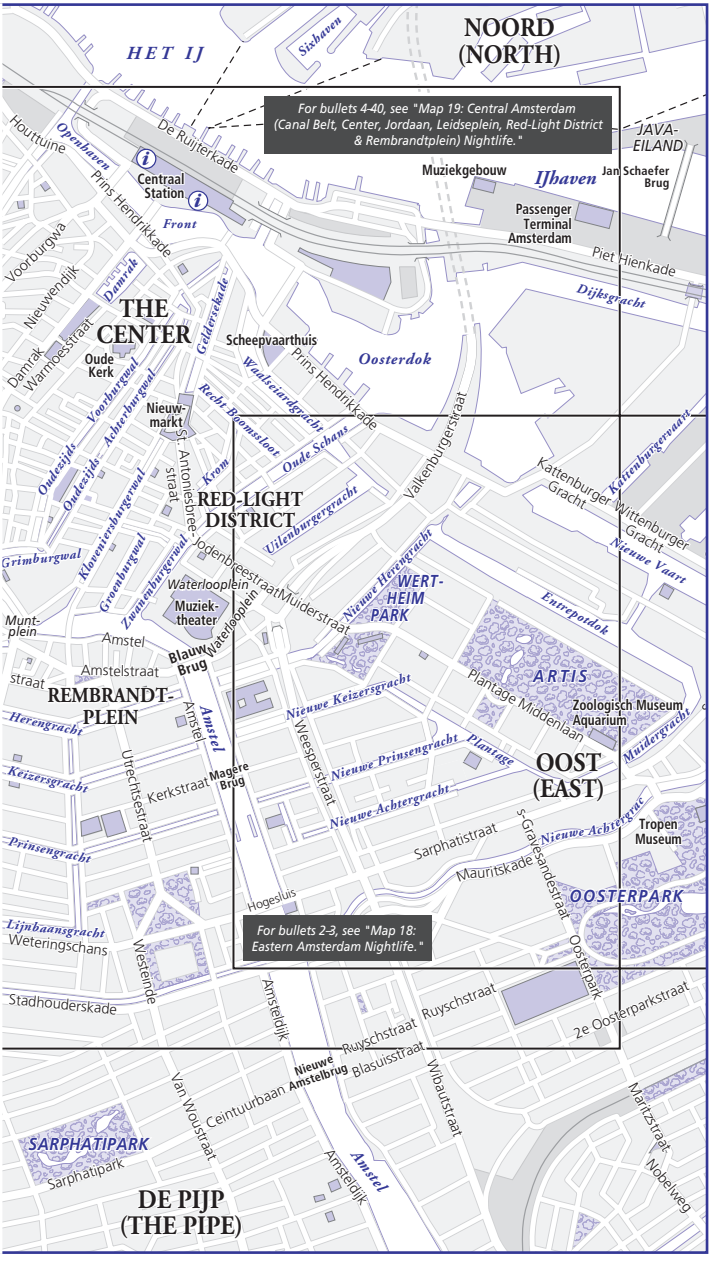
NIGH

TLIFE 6

Map 17: Amsterdam Nightlife



NIGHTLIFE


HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD (NORTH)
For bullets 4-40, see "Map 19: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District & Rembrandtplein) Nightlife."
Houttuine
Openbaren
De Ruijterkade
Centraal Station
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
JAVA-EILAND
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer Brug
Passenger Terminal Amsterdam
Piet Heinkade
Dijksgracht
Voorburgwa
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
THE CENTER
Geldersekade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Oude Kerk
Warmoesstraat
Waalseilandsgracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Nieuw-markt
Rechter Boomsloot
Oude Schans
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Krom
Valkenburgerstraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburgervaart
Wittenburger Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Uilenburgergracht
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgerwal
Jodenbreestraat
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-HEIM PARK
Entrepotdok
Waterlooplein
Waterlooplein
Muziek-theater
Munt-plein
Amstel
Blauwbrug
Amstelstraat
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum Aquarium
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Herengracht
Amstel
Weesperstraat
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Plantage Muidergracht
Keizersgracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere Brug
OOST (EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Sarphatistraat
Tropen Museum
Prinsengracht
Mauritskade
s-Gravesandestraat
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
For bullets 2-3, see "Map 18: Eastern Amsterdam Nightlife."
Wetering-schans
Weteringstraat
Stadhouderskade
Amsteldijk
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
Nieuwe Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstel
Amsteldijk
Maritzstraat
Nobelweg
DE PIJP (THE PIPE)

Basic Stuff

Amsterdam's reputation as Europe's sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll capital is as solid as ever. A steady stream of European 20-somethings—particularly British and German—flows into the city solely for the nightlife. You can drink whenever you want; clubs usually open around 10pm, get lively at midnight, and buzz until 4am Monday to Thursday and Sunday (until 5am Fri and Sat). Cover charges are usually a low 4€ to 6€ ($4.60–$6.90), with drinks for 1.50€ to 4€ ($1.75–$4.60). If you're at least 18, you can buy and consume what you please, where you please. Erotic—i.e., porno—venues are rife. The city is rich with smoking coffee shops where you can puff dope and hash; most have ear-boggling live or canned music. The gay scene is world-class, with venues that cater to every taste, including hardcore S&M.

Hangouts range from tiny, laid-back cafes and bars to huge, exclusive 100 beats-per-minute dance clubs with sui generis dress codes and ferocious bouncers. For bureaucratic reasons, some clubs call themselves "societies" and theoretically require you to pay a "membership fee" (2€–5€/$2.30–$5.75), nearly always waived at the door. Clubwear boutiques (see the Shopping chapter) cater to serious clubbers keen to get into the top venues—iT, Sinners in Heaven, More, the Supperclub, and Escape.

Rave parties, organized by professionals and usually held in warehouses or theaters, are no longer the thing unless you're into acid, spasm-inducing noise (i.e., "music"), and pushy creeps in smelly synthetic sweat suits. Raves and other "events" (such as "fetish fantasy" nights) are announced via leaflets distributed in clubs, bars, and cafes; the cover charge is usually about 20€ ($23). Clubs are hipper, and the harder it is to get into them the better they are. Admittance is based on your look, sexual orientation, and the people you hang out with. As elsewhere, clubs and star DJs spring up like proverbial mushrooms; trends in music come and go. What's hip today—a mix of pumping house, grunge, hypnotic techno and progressive trance, drum & bass, 100-bpm club house, rave, speed garage, R&B, soul, jazz-dance—will be passé tomorrow. Most venues listed here have been around awhile and look likely to last in one form or another. Also see the Dining & Cafes chapter for some of the 1,400 or so brown, white, and designer cafes where people of all ages, looks, and sexual orientations spend a great deal of their time day and night.

House of Ill Repute with a Great Reputation

There's prostitution, and there's prostitution. In Amsterdam, streetwalkers are illegal (most are desperate young addicts). Bordellos are not. The most celebrated one in town—a decades-old institution—is Yab Yum, owned and managed by affable Théo Heuft and Madame Monique, his Swiss friend. Everyone loves Yab Yum; especially taxi drivers, who get a hefty tip if they deposit you there. The name: a goddess of love heavily featured in the Kama Sutra. The location: a 17th-century mansion on Singel, far from the sleaze of the Red-Light District (plus there's a branch in Rotterdam and one at Schiphol Airport). The women: 20 nightly, all Dutch, well-educated, gorgeous, ages 18 to 24 (with one perfectly preserved 40-something). Most are reportedly stewardesses, nurses, students, and housewives—all strictly moonlighting: No one is twisting their arms. The clientele: businessmen, jet-setters, and kinky couples into threesomes or orgies.

The setup: A musclebound bouncer leads you up the stairs and rings a buzzer. An elegant guy—a banker by day?—shakes your hand, and initiates you into the mysteries. You can change money in the lobby or use a credit card. The decor: quintessential cat-house stuff. There are stalagmite chandeliers, nudes, a lounge with a splashing Venus fountain, and a U*-shaped bar where the ladies perch on stools. The price: about 75€ ($86) to get in; about 160€ to 500€ ($184–$575) for champagne while you chat. Innocent entertainment can stop there. It's about 360€ ($414) per hour per woman should you decide to mount the faux leopard-skin carpet leading to the 11 luxury bedrooms, fitted out like the extravagant whorehouses of Hollywood westerns but with Jacuzzis and beds big enough for, well, use your imagination. Expensive? To paraphrase Sly and the Family Stone: The nicer the nice, the higher the price. (Yab Yum; tel 020/624-9503; www.yabyum.nl; Singel 295; open daily 8pm–4am).*

Smoke Houses

Here's Dutch ambiguity again: Officially, drug menus are illegal, but all smoking coffee shops have them (they are often small, and you must ask specifically to see one). A typical dope menu reads as follows: per gram cost: "Skunk," 5.70€ to 8.40€ ($6.55–$9.65); "Sauraica," 6.40€ ($7.35); "Morocco," hash 5.25€ to 13€ ($6.05–$15); "Afghanistan," hash 3.60€ to 10€ ($4.15–$12); "India," 11€ ($12). A single joint is about 3.50€ ($4.05). Even in smoking coffee shops, though, you are never limited to smoking the dope: You can eat and drink the stuff, too—in space cakes, brownies, or hash tea. So when ordering food or drinks, make sure you're getting what you want. If you don't partake, that's fine, but you might get a free contact high just eating a sandwich (some places serve health food) or drinking fruit juices or soft drinks that may have residual dope somewhere in them. The sale and consumption of alcohol in all

smoking coffee shops is theoretically forbidden, part of a successful effort by city officials to bring down their numbers.

Sources

The up-to-the-minute entertainment info sources in English are ***Day by Day,*** the VVV tourism bureau's strait-laced monthly magazine; ***Gay & Night Magazine,*** an alternative entertainment monthly written by and for the gay community; and ***Shark,*** a giveaway with a 20-something, outlandish readership. Rave invitations are found in clubs, bars, shops, and cafes, while rave tickets and insider info are available from the city's top clubwear shops, including **Clubwear-House** and **Wasteland** (see the Shopping chapter for both). For one-stop ticketing and information on music, parties, and the club scene, call or visit the **AUB Uitburo** (Leidseplein 26; tel 0900-0191; www.uitlijn.nl; trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein; open daily 9am–9pm).

The Lowdown

Kink on stage... If you're dreaming of breaking into the hardcore live Dutch porno scene and would like to leap onstage to display your prowess, **Casa Rosso**, the city's most famous erotic theater, is the place for you. (You'd better be well endowed.) Nearby, operated by the same pornomeisters, is the **Bananenbar,** where the classic Mexican donkey act has been replaced by a piece of artfully wielded fruit. Audience participation is welcome; fruit is distributed free, and the rest I leave to your imagination.

That arty, multiculti thing... Fun of a less obscene kind is at **Melkweg,** an Amsterdam institution that started in hippy days and has evolved into an international multimedia cultural center, with everything from a cafe and smoking coffee shop to music and dance spaces.

Dutch drinking songs... Sing-along cafes, where older locals belt beer and *jenever* and then break into old Dutch songs, are a dying breed, but a handful still exist, especially in the Jordaan. That's where you'll find both **Café Nol,** whose red-vinyl stools prop up local roisterers, and **Café De Twee Zwaantjes,** with famously tobacco-stained walls, full-throated singers, and live accordion music. In the same

vein, though across town in the east, Ruk & Pluk (see the Dining & Cafes chapter) is a neobrown cafe run by a jovial gay couple, where mixed locals make merry against the Brazilian carnival backdrop, breaking into song when the spirit moves them.

Smoking out... If you'd sooner forget all of Amsterdam's other special attractions, you can enjoy its tolerant approach to soft-drug use by diverting yourself into oblivion at any one of the 250 or so smoking coffee shops found on practically every street (p. 211). Center-city establishments are almost exclusively frequented by tourists. City officials estimate that 90% of these supposedly laid-back, cool places are now owned by international organized crime, a thought to keep in mind as you plunk down your nice, clean euros. **The Bulldog,** a 28-year-old veteran—filled with bleary-eyed tourists oblivious to the deafening music and snarling staff—is the archetype. It has half a dozen locations downtown and in the Red-Light District. **The Grasshopper** is strictly for curious tourists, because it's bright and clean and has a big terrace overlooking the docks on Damrak. **Paradox** and **Kadinsky** are among the only center-city places with a neighborhood feel. City and police authorities continue to eliminate as many dope-smoking establishments as they can, so these are here-today, possibly-gone-tomorrow addresses.

Painting the town pink... Lesbians only have a few nightclub venues and tend to organize private parties, announced with leaflets. The lesbian community's most celebrated hangout is **Café Saarein II,** an old brown cafe in the Jordaan with a pool table, a woman-watching mezzanine, and a bulletin board where lesbian parties are announced. Saarein also welcomes gay men. Other, less lavender venues welcome lesbians, too. There's a women-only dance venue called **You 2;** and some nights are women-only at the **GETTO** (a bar). One Sunday a month at **Melkweg** there's lesbian dancing-clubbing; the party moves to **Vrankrijk,** a wild "squatter's club," every third Sunday of the month (Planet Pussy is the lip-smacking name of these wild theme nights). iT is the city's hippest dance venue, followed by More; both are exclusively for gay men on Saturdays and Wednesdays, but mixed the rest of the week. Dress and act like a glamorous lunatic (feathers

and sequins are big) and you'll probably get in. **iT** has heart-stopping techno house music, artificial smoke, lightning-storm spotlights, and a grandstand for voyeurs. **More** is less glam, though that's not what the owners think. Reguliersdwarsstraat is currently the hottest gay area in town; **April** bar, **Soho** bar, and **Exit** dance clubs are here. They're among the most fashionable venues for beautiful people, gay and lesbian, who begin their night with a drink at the modern-looking bars, then wander down or across the street for DJ dancing and other amusements. Nearby at **Havana's,** a gay cafe-club, things get especially hot on Friday and Sunday nights. Hardcore is the specialty at **Cockring,** in the leather and S&M gay district on Warmoesstraat. There are the usual ear-splitting house music and blinding lights on the vast dance floor, as well as a particularly active back room where tough guys get up to all sorts of tricks. **COC,** just down the street, is tamer, appealing mostly to local guys in their 30s (Saturday nights are women only).

Dance fever... The postpubescents who like to wriggle and scream to deafening vintage hard rock or contemporary ear-exploding noise go to **Arena,** a large venue in a former orphanage. Anyone and everyone dances at **Mazzo,** a big dance hall in the Jordaan with no dress code, where top DJs spin mostly cutting-edge stuff. The cultural center **Melkweg** has popular dance club nights on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, where a mixed-age crowd dances to funk, jungle music, hip-hop, soul, R&B, and club-house. Sunday nights are Planet Pussy—women only. At nearby **Paradiso,** the DJ theme nights—so-called VIP club nights, like "Drum & Bass," "Big Beat," or "Speedgarage"—can be a big draw, filling the place to capacity. The in crowd, both gay and straight, dances near Rembrandtplein at exclusive venues like **Sinners in Heaven, Escape,** and **iT,** famous for its huge dance floor, sound system, and top DJ theme nights. Ditto **More,** a club in the Jordaan that considers itself the heir to now-defunct Roxy, and on a par with iT and Sinners in Heaven. **The Back Door** has taken over from Soul Kitchen and features funky vocal, house music and catwalk performances. Gay-only dance clubs are **Cockring,** with a big dance floor and blinding lights, and **Soho** or **Exit,** fashionable, upscale dance clubs on Reguliersdwarsstraat, where you can dance or dress up for

drag-queen balls. **COC,** a tame gay cafe-club, offers a variety of theme dance and DJ nights. Lesbians dance at **You 2,** Amsterdam's sole women-only venue and at Planet Pussy theme nights at **Melkweg** and **Vrankrijk.**

All that jazz 'n blues... Jazz is big in Amsterdam, though performance quality isn't consistent. The biggest and unquestionably the best club is **Bimhuis,** in an old shipping warehouse rebuilt entirely in the late 1990s. The atmosphere is like New York's Village Vanguard, with top names and rapt audiences who smoke, grunt, and groove. Tickets are pricey and hard to get; try the VVV and Uitburo. Note that Bimhuis will join De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum at the new Muziekgebouw, close to Centraal Station in the harbor area, around the end of 2004 or the start of 2005. Two less ambitious but good clubs near Leidseplein are almost interchangeable: **Alto Jazz Café**—the city's oldest—and **Bourbon Street.** They're smoky, cozy, and crowded with Americans, English expats, and locals 25 and up. As the names suggest, jazz and blues—most of it cool—is the name of the game. Similar, and nearby, the **Bamboo Bar** offers cocktail-lounge jazz and blues plus a grab bag of world music, Brazilian, folk, and country and western. The **Westergasfabriek** is a converted gas plant where trendies groove to jazz and a blend of everything but house; its motto, hanging on the wall: "Jazz is the teacher. Funk is the preacher. And with hip-hop it won't stop."

For experimental jazz—more like contemporary atonal chamber music—**De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum** is a vibrant, cutting-edge venue favored by intellectuals and the designer-stubble set—the operation is due to move to the new Muziekgebouw concert hall (along with Bimhuis) at the harbor sometime around the end of 2004 or the start of 2005 (whenever construction is completed), but the IJsbreker cafe should remain in place. De Engelbewaarder (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), a so-called literary brown cafe, is where intellectuals wearing "I'm Cool" badges hang out in a bluish fog and listen to live jazz on Sunday afternoons (and some nights). Cristofori (see the Entertainment chapter), a big piano repair and sales outfit with a fabulous Prinsengracht location, hosts jazz concerts regularly in its fifth-floor auditorium. For jazz info call

020/770-0660 or visit www.jazz-in-amsterdam.nl (see the Entertainment chapter). When it comes to the blues, nobody does it better in Amsterdam than **Maloe Melo.** This small club features live blues most nights, interspersed with evenings of jazz and country, and jams on Tuesday and Thursday nights. The music's quality varies, from sounds lovingly created by capable amateurs to those cooked up by an occasional big name, but a pleasantly intimate setting and a zealous audience make for a good time.

For fabulous, beautiful people... You'll probably make it into **iT** if you spend enough on your clothes—plumes, sequins, foot-high spikes. This huge, nominally gay club is famous for its jet-setting crowd and wild theme nights. Spot the same jet-setters with mega-wardrobes at **Sinners in Heaven,** an outlandish place with mock-medieval decor fit for a torture chamber, and **Escape,** a vast old theater space done over regularly for theme nights. **The Back Door** and **More,** new to the scene, are tamer, with a media-moneyed and fashion crowd. The owners of More also run the Supperclub, a restaurant-club-cabaret where the gorgeously brain-dead lie recumbant on sofas while munching to DJ sounds (see the Entertainment chapter for details). **Time,** with minimalist, distressed-iron decor and music to match (the gamut of club sounds), attracts a raunchier, tougher crowd. Intellectual and wannabe hipsters go to the **Westergasfabriek,** where everything but house music is on the sound system—funk, jazz, power soul, Latin, hip-hop, R&B, and boom-boom. Designer 25- to 35-year-olds who don't feel like dancing drift into the Café Luxembourg on Spui, or the Wildschut (see the Dining & Cafes chapter for both), where they meld with the worn leather armchairs and sofas, drink, and listen to mellow jazz and 1970s rock tapes.

For youthquakers... Grungy expats, pimply club crawlers, and the smoking-coffee-shop set love **Arena,** an aptly named teenybopper-plus club in an old orphanage, soundproofed like an asylum, with an atmosphere to match (there's a hotel in the building, too; see more about Arena in chapter 1). It's great if you like undiscovered DJs who blast out whatever is currently breaking eardrums. The

same crew can also be spotted at **The Bulldog,** that celebrated chain of smoking coffee shops, with loud rock and gruff help. Glamorous youngsters dressed elaborately are welcomed at **iT,** a gay dance club with mixed nights, set in a dark, cavernous hall. House music throbs, and the stunning iT dancers flex on raised platforms at the command of demonic DJs. **Sinners in Heaven** has a medieval-theme interior that junior S&M practitioners will love. Depending on the night, **Escape,** on Rembrandtplein in a vast theater space, can be full of 20- to 30-year-old trendies. Rejects from the top clubs often drift over to **Mazzo,** a big dance venue with a nondescript interior in the Jordaan; it has no dress code and plays all kinds of music. **Paradiso,** in a deconsecrated church off Leidseplein, is where clubbers go for rock and new-music concerts. Most bands are local or unknown. Paradiso is also popular for warming up before heading out to dance. **Melkweg** has Friday and Saturday theme house parties.

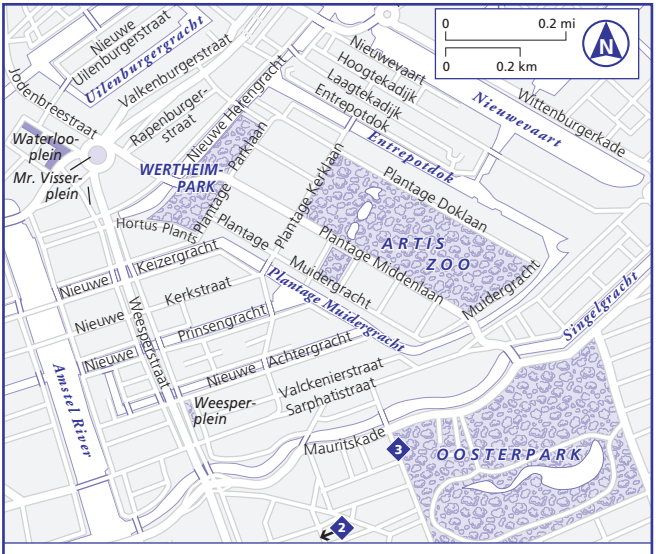
For baby-boomers and up... It's not as if the bouncers won't let over-30s into iT, Escape, More, The Back Door, or Sinners in Heaven—the top venues—or any of the other 1,001 youth venues in town. But if you prefer to be around a crowd with more mature elements, head for any of the city's 1,400 cafes (see the Dining & Cafes chapter). Or try a music club like **Bimhuis,** the city's top jazz venue, and the three smoky, crowded jazz and blues clubs around Leidseplein—**Alto Jazz Café, Bourbon Street,** and **Bamboo Bar. Westergasfabriek** is fine for the long-in-tooth types, provided they're still hip. Gray hairs are sometimes spotted at the Engelbewaarder (see the Dining & Cafes chapter), a literary cafe with classic cool jazz. **Mazzo** welcomes anyone—no matter how old or infirm—willing to pay. You're unlikely to see anyone under 30 at **Café De Twee Zwaantjes** or **Café Nol;** ditto their wilder, eastern-Amsterdam counterpart Ruk & Pluk (see the Dining & Cafes chapter).

Where to drink hard... Older intellectuals and literary types favor **Grant Café De Still,** where owner Henk Eggens pours the world's best whiskies in his tiny bar. Serious drinkers (and Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American

hotel guests) lounge at the **Bar Américain,** another time warp of a place where the bartender remembers your name and your favorite drink. **Mulligan's** is a typical Irish bar, with live folk music and a friendly crowd that's both straight and gay, old and young.

Erotic play for gays... Scores of gay bars and dance clubs show porno films, and many have the kind of back rooms—also known as dark rooms—that disappeared elsewhere in the AIDS-ravaged '80s. For example, **Cockring,** an aptly named hardcore club in the leather and S&M district, is renowned for its back room near the upstairs toilets. The biggest, most glamorous gay venue, **iT,** also has a back room, reportedly very feral on Saturday nights. **Exit,** the fashionable gay place on Reguliersdwarsstraat, hosts drag-queen balls and shows gay films that whip the boys into a frenzy. Lesbians head instead to **You 2,** a women-only joint, or Planet Pussy theme nights (Sundays, once a month each) at **Melkweg** and **Vrankrijk** or Saturday nights at **COC,** a gay cafe-club-dance setting.

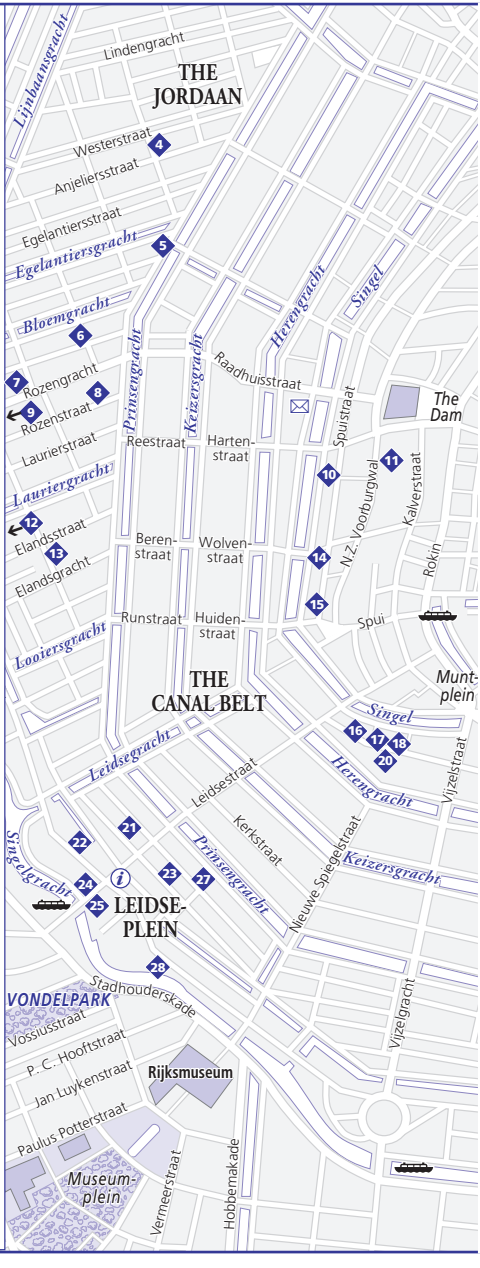
Map 18: Eastern Amsterdam Nightlife



Arena **3**
De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum **2**

Map 19: Central Amsterdam Nightlife

Alto Jazz Café **23**
April **17**
April's Exit **18**
The Back Door **40**
Bamboo Bar **21**
Bananenbar **32, 33**
Bar Américain **24**
Bimhuis **34**
Bourbon Street **27**
The Bulldog **25**
CaféNol **4**
CaféSaarein II **13**
CaféDe Twee Zwaantjes **5**
Casa Rosso **33**
COC **8**
Cockring **31**
Escape **36**
GETTO **30**
Grant CaféDe Still **15**
The Grasshopper **29**
Havana's **16**
IT **39**
Kadinsky **14**
Maloe Melo **12**
Mazzo **7**
Melkweg **22**
More **9**
Mulligan's **35**
Paradiso **28**
Paradox **6**
Sinners in Heaven **38**
Soho **20**
Time **11**
Vrankrijk **10**
You 2 **37**



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Canal tour boats
Information
Post office
Railway
Het IJ
De Ruijterkade
Centraal Station
Openbaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
THE CENTER
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Zeedijk
Geldersekade
Oosterdok
IJ-Tunnel
Oudekerks-plein
Warmoesstraat
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Nieuwmarkt
Oude Waal
Waals Eilandsgracht
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Schans
Oude
Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat
Uilenburgergracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Hoogtekadijk
Entrepotdok
Plantage Doklaan
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Waterloo-plein
Mr. Visserplein
Herengracht
OOST (EAST)
ARTIS
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
Plantage Muidergracht
Nieuwe
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Amstel River
Kerkstraat
Utrechtsestraat
Weesperstraat
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Falckstraat
Frederiks-plein
Wibautstraat
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade

The Index

Alto Jazz Café (p. 215, 217) LEIDSEPLEIN American and English expats, plus locals, crowd into this smoky, cramped club, the oldest jazz venue in town. Modern and classic tunes are played by the Alto Jazz Ensemble.... *Tel 020/626-3249. Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 115 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily 5pm–3 or 4am (jazz from around 10pm). No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 23.

April, Exit, and Soho (p. 214, 218) CENTER The most famous—and fashionable—gay bars and dance venues in town, in the heart of the Reguliersdwarsstraat gay district. Condoms available at all three spots (same owner).... *Tel 020/625-9572 and 020/625-8788. Reguliersdwarsstraat 36, 37, and 42 at Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. Open daily; bars 10pm–1 or 2am, dance floor 10pm–4 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 17.
See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 18.
See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 20.

Arena (p. 214, 216) EAST Huge club on various levels of an old orphanage, where international up-and-comers play very loud crossover rock—or whatever else is breaking—for a decidedly young crowd.... *Tel 020/694-7444. 's Gravesandestraat 51 at Mauritskade. Trams 7, 9, 10, 14 to Mauritskade. Open Thurs–Sun 10pm–3am. Cover.*

See Map 18 on p. 219, bullet 3.

The Back Door (p. 214, 216) REMBRANDTPLEIN Outrageous fashion shows, funky vocal house music, Sunday "tea dance" at this new, hip club.... *Tel 020/620-2333. Amstelstraat 32A. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open daily 10pm–4 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 40.

Bamboo Bar (p. 215, 217) LEIDSEPLEIN A mix of jazz, world music, Brazilian, folk, country and western, and blues at this smoky, crowded club.... *Tel 020/624-3993. Lange Leidsedwarsstraat 66. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open Mon–Sat 10pm–2 or 3am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 21.

Bananenbar (p. 212) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Uniquely appalling places where scantily clad ladies use bananas to surprising effect. Porno emporium crowd; sticky floors.... *Tel 020/627-8945 and 020/622-4670. www.bananenbar.com. Oudezijds Achterburgwal 106 at Stoofsteeg and Oudezijds Achterburgwal 37 at Molensteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open nightly 8pm–2 or 3am. Cover, but drinks are free.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullets 32, 33.

Bar Américain (p. 218) LEIDSEPLEIN Classic hardcore drinker's bar, just off the lobby of the Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American Hotel.... *Tel 020/624-5322. Leidsekade 97 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily noon–2 or 3am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 24.

Bimhuis (p. 215, 217) EASTERN DOCKS Amsterdam's prime jazz club for the last 20 years, housed in a landmark building remodeled with a modern bar (but due to up stakes and decamp to the new Muziekgebouw at the harbor around the end of 2004). American and international big names come here. Free jam sessions several times a week.... *Tel 020/623-1361. www.bimhuis.nl. Oude Schans 73 at Waterlooplein. Tram 9, 14 to Waterlooplein; Metro to Nieuwmarkt. Concerts generally start at 9pm; the bar stays open to around 2am. Cover 12€–18€ ($14–$21).*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 34.

Bourbon Street (p. 215, 217) LEIDSEPLEIN More spacious and mainstream than Alto Jazz or Bamboo Bar, this live jazz and blues venue draws a tame crowd. Minimum age: 23.... *Tel 020/623-3440. Leidsekruisstraat 6 at Prinsengracht. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily 5pm–4 or 5am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 27.

The Bulldog (p. 213, 217) LEIDSEPLEIN An institution among smoking coffee shops.... *Tel 020/627-1908. Leidseplein 15. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily 9am–1am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 25.

Café De Twee Zwaantjes (p. 212, 217) JORDAAN Famous singalong brown cafe, with famously tobacco-stained walls.... *Tel 020/625-2729. Prinsengracht 114 at Egelantiersgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open daily noon–1am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 5.

Café Nol (p. 212, 217) JORDAAN There's a U-shaped bar, velvet stools, and lace on the windows at this legendary brown cafe. Older crowd, and very, very few tourists. A campy blast from the past.... *Tel 020/624-5380. Westerstraat 109 at Eerste Anjeliersdwarsstraat. Trams 3, 10 to Marnixplein. Open daily 11am–2 or 3am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 4.

Café Saarein II (p. 213) JORDAAN Amsterdam's most famous (and notorious) lesbian cafe now welcomes gay men.... *Tel 020/623-4901. Elandsstraat 119 at Hazenstraat. Trams 7, 10, 17 to Elandsgracht. Open daily 8pm–1am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 13.

Casa Rosso (p. 212) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT A bordellolike erotic theater with live sex on stage (audience participation welcome; you'd better be well hung). Brought to you by the same folks who run the Erotic Museum (see the Diversions chapter).... *Tel 020/627-8945. Oudezijds Achterburgwal 106 at Stoofsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open nightly 8pm–2 or 3am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 33.

COC (p. 214, 215, 218) JORDAAN Gay cafe-club and dance venue favored by clean-cut locals. No hardcore.... *Tel 020/626-3087. Rozenstraat 14 at Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Opening hours vary; Saturday nights women only. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 8.

Cockring (p. 214, 218) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT A hardcore gay club in the center of the leather and S&M district. Condoms available.... *Tel 020/623-9604. Warmoesstraat 96 at Wijde Kerksteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 11pm–4 or 5am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 31.

De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum (p. 215) EAST Check out the arty crowd in the cafe if your ears resist departure from the standard seven-tone scale. Currently on the Amstel River south of Singelgracht, the music end of the operation will shift to the harborside Muziekgebouw around the end of 2004 or the start of 2005.... *Tel 020/668-1805. Weesperzijde 23 at Ruyschstraat. Tram 3 to Wibautstraat. Concert times vary; the bar stays open to 1 or 2am. Cover for concerts; no cover for the bar.*

See Map 18 on p. 219, bullet 2.

Escape (p. 214, 216, 217) REMBRANDTPLEIN This cavernous club is favored by hip 20-somethings in silly clothes who flutter like demented butterflies between the other self-consciously cool clubs—Sinners in Heaven, The Back Door, and iT. The decor and sounds change with every party, though the register remains industrial-chic and house. Saturday "Chemistry" theme night is hot. Top DJs. Clubwear and attitude essential.... *Tel 020/622-1111. www.escape.nl and www.chemistry.nl. Rembrandtplein 11. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Wed–Sun 10pm–4 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 36.

GETTO (p. 213) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT Popular gay bar-restaurant; Tuesday nights women only.... *Tel 020/421-5151. www.getto.nl.*

Warmoesstraat 51 at Oude Brugsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open daily 7pm–1am. No cover.

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 30.

Grant Café De Still (p. 217) CENTER A tiny vintage bar in old Amsterdam. Affable Henk Eggens pours hundreds of the world's oldest and rarest whiskies.... *Tel 020/620-1349. Spuistraat 326 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open Mon–Sat 4pm–midnight. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 15.

The Grasshopper (p. 213) CENTER Clean, well lit, and on the cusp of the Red-Light District, this smoking coffee shop with a regular cafe and steakhouse on the upper floors is a tourist magnet.... *Tel 020/626-1529. Oude Brugsteeg 16 at Damrak. Trams 4, 9, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Open Mon–Thurs and Sun 10:30am–1am, Fri–Sat 8:30am–2am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 29.

Havana's (p. 214) CENTER Gay cafe-club and dance venue in the Reguliersdwarsstraat gay district, patronized by the same friendly 20s and 30s crowd as April, Soho, and Exit nearby.... *Tel 020/620-6788. Reguliersdwarsstraat 17–19 at Koningsplein. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Koningsplein. Open Sun–Thurs 6pm–1am, Fri–Sat 6pm–2am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 16.

iT (p. 214, 216, 217, 218) REMBRANDTPLEIN Huge gay club-dance place with mixed nights Thursday, Friday, and Sunday. Saturday is strictly gay. There's room for 1,100 hipsters in the black-warehouse interior. Fancy dress required.... *Tel 020/421-6924. www.it.nl. Amstelstraat 24 at Rembrandtplein. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Thurs–Sun 10pm–4 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 39.

Kadinsky (p. 213) CENTER Relaxed, clean smoking coffee shop with neighborhood atmosphere (thick).... *Tel 020/624-7023. Rosmarijnsteeg 9 at Spuistraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Open daily 10am–1am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 14.

Maloe Melo (p. 216) JORDAAN Amsterdam's smoky "home of the blues".... *Tel 020/420-4592. www.maloemelo.nl. Lijnbaansgracht 163 at Elandsstraat. Trams 7, 10, 17 to Elandsgracht. Open Sun–Thurs 9pm–4am, Fri–Sat 9pm–5am (music from 10:30pm). Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 12.

Mazzo (p. 214, 217) JORDAAN Unpretentious, large club with nondescript interior. No dress code.... *Tel 020/626-7500. Rozengracht*

114 at Akoleienstraat. Trams 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open daily 9pm–4 or 5am. Cover.

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 7.

Melkweg **(p. 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 218)** LEIDSEPLEIN An Amsterdam institution, this multimedia cultural center offers a maze of postindustrial-hip spaces in a former dairy (see the Entertainment chapter). There's a cafe and smoking coffee shop, a bar and restaurant, an art center, a dance and movement theater, a cinema, and lots of interesting music. There's also a dance club (Thurs–Sun 11pm–5am).... *Tel 020/531-8181. Lijnbaansgracht 234A at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open daily 3pm–5am. Cover plus membership.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 22.

More **(p. 214, 216)** JORDAAN Glam club favored by fashion models, TV dolls and dudes, and other beautiful, self-conscious types. Theme nights Friday and Saturday; Wednesday gay night.... *Tel 020/528-7459. Rozengracht 133 at Tweede Rozendwarsstraat. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Marnixstraat. Open Thurs–Sat 11pm–5am, Sun 5pm–midnight, 1st Wed of month 11pm–4am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 9.

Mulligan's **(p. 218)** REMBRANDTPLEIN The most appealing of Amsterdam's half-dozen beery Irish bars, with live folk music, spoon playing, and the like on Friday and Saturday. Crowded, noisy, smoky, friendly.... *Tel 020/622-1330. Amstel 100 at Bakkersstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open daily noon–1 or 2am. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 35.

Paradiso **(p. 214, 217)** LEIDSEPLEIN A deconsecrated church—the stairway to heaven for new-music and rock fiends. Occasional theme club nights, with DJs.... *Tel 020/623-7348. Weteringschans 6–8 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open usually 10pm–3am. Cover, plus membership.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 28.

Paradox **(p. 213)** JORDAAN A friendly neighborhood smoking coffee shop favored by English expats.... *Tel 020/623-5639. Eerste Bloemdwarsstraat 2 at Bloemgracht. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Open daily 10am–8pm. No cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 6.

Sinners in Heaven **(p. 214, 216, 217)** REMBRANDTPLEIN Favored by jet-setters, Ajax soccer heroes, and visiting (and aging) rock stars like Mick Jagger. Top DJs and theme nights.... *Tel 020/620-1375. www.sinners.nl. Wagenstraat 3 at Rembrandtplein. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Wed–Sun 10pm–4 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 38.

Time **(p. 216)** CENTER Trendy, 20s–30s crowd. Minimalist decor with lots of bashed iron. The usual mix of house music, plus Dutch drum and bass. Strictly no sportswear.... *No phone. Voorburgwal 163–165 at Jonge Roelensteeg. Trams 1, 2, 5 to the Dam. Open Thurs–Sun 11pm–3 or 5am. Cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 11.

Vrankrijk **(p. 213, 215, 218)** CENTER Gay-straight "squatters' club" with Queer Night on Monday and Planet Pussy lesbian nights every third Sunday. Rough 'n' ready scene.... *No phone. Spuistraat 216 at Wijdesteeg. Trams 1, 2, 5 to the Dam. Daily 10pm–4 or 5 am. Occasional cover.*

See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 10.

Westergasfabriek **(p. 215, 216, 217)** WESTERN DOCKS Converted industrial site on the western edge of town, now a hip club, bar, and restaurant (there's a barbecue in the middle of the room).... *Tel 020/621-1211. Haarlemmerweg 6–10 at Westerpark. Tram 10 to Van Limburg Stirumstraat. Open 11:30am–1 or 2am; lunch 11:30am–3pm, dinner 6–10:30pm. Cover for some events.*

See Map 17 on p. 208, bullet 1.

You 2 **(p. 213, 215, 218)** REMBRANDTPLEIN Amsterdam's only lesbian dance club.... *Tel 020/421-0900. Amstel 178 at Wagenstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14 to Rembrandtplein. Open Thurs–Sat 10pm–4am, Sun 4pm–1am. Cover.*

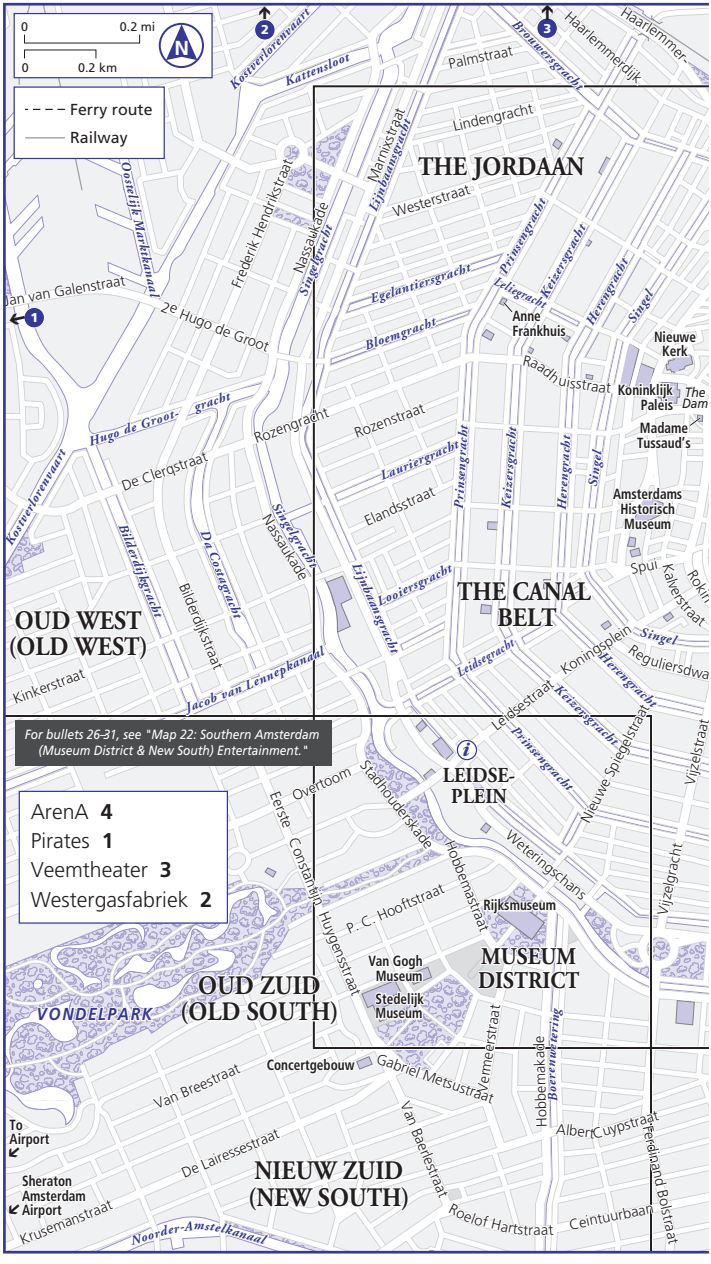
See Map 19 on p. 220, bullet 37.

ENTERTA

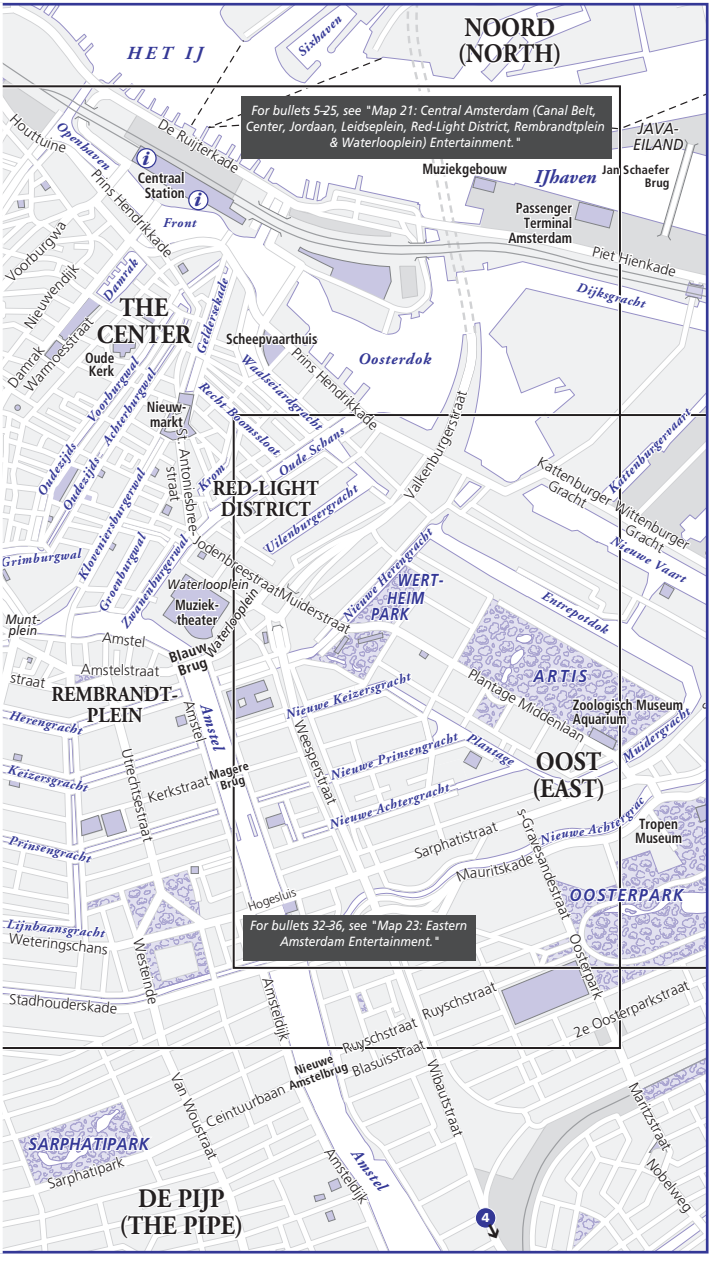
INMENT

7

Map 20: Amsterdam Entertainment



ENTERTAINMENT


HET IJ
Sixhaven
NOORD (NORTH)
For bullets 5-25, see "Map 21: Central Amsterdam (Canal Belt, Center, Jordaan, Leidseplein, Red-Light District, Rembrandtplein & Waterlooplein) Entertainment."
Houttuine
Openbaren
De Ruijterkade
Centraal Station
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
Muziekgebouw
IJhaven
Jan Schaefer Brug
JAVA-EILAND
Passenger Terminal Amsterdam
Piet Heinkade
Dijksgracht
Voorburgwal
Nieuwendijk
Damrak
Warmoesstraat
THE CENTER
Oude Kerk
Gelderskade
Scheepvaarthuis
Oosterdok
Waalseilandsgracht
Prins Hendrikkade
Nieuw-markt
Rechter Boomsloot
Oude Schans
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
St. Antoniesbreestraat
Kolk
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Valkenburgerstraat
Kattenburgergracht
Kattenburger Gracht
Wittenburger Gracht
Nieuwe Vaart
Grimburgwal
Kloveniersburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Jodenbreestraat
Uilenburgergracht
Waterlooplein
Muziek-theater
Muiderstraat
Nieuwe Herengracht
WERT-HEIM PARK
Entrepotdok
Munt-plein
Amstel
Blauwbrug
Amstelstraat
ARTIS
Plantage Middenlaan
Zoologisch Museum Aquarium
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Nieuwe Keizersgracht
Weesperstraat
Herengracht
Keizersgracht
Prinsengracht
Utrechtsestraat
Kerkstraat
Magere Brug
Nieuwe Prinsengracht
Planetenlaan
Muidergracht
OOST (EAST)
Nieuwe Achtergracht
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
's-Gravesandestraat
Tropen Museum
OOSTERPARK
Hogesluis
For bullets 32-36, see "Map 23: Eastern Amsterdam Entertainment."
Lijnbaansgracht
Weteringschans
Westerstraat
Stadhouderskade
Amstelstraat
Ruyschstraat
2e Oosterparkstraat
Oosterpark
Nieuwe Amstelbrug
Blasiusstraat
Wibautstraat
Van Woustraat
Ceintuurbaan
SARPHATIPARK
Sarphatipark
Amstelstraat
Marnixstraat
Nobelweg
DE PIJP (THE PIPE)
4

Basic Stuff

Unless you speak fluent Dutch or get your kicks by sitting through performances you can hardly understand, an Amsterdam theater is not the best place to spend your entertainment euro (and it doesn't help that the overall quality of the shows and performers is a bit less than world-class). Still, it's remarkable that a city of less than a million boasts some 60 theaters and concert halls. Such stats suggest a culture vulture need never sit at home cursing the language barrier.

The best time of year for the arts in Amsterdam is June, when the innovative Holland Festival (which runs simultaneously in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) brings an abundance of international theater (in various languages, including English), dance, opera, and music to the city's stages. The Amsterdam Arts Adventure, running from late May through August, offers music and dance performances aimed primarily at tourists (no theater, no language probs). It, too, occupies a variety of venues. Music is, of course, a good bet year-round since it speaks all languages, but summer is a particularly musical time in the city's ancient but restless churches, whose frequent concerts make regular use of Amsterdam's 42 historical organs. Movies are a good choice, too, since most are in English; many, in fact, are American- or British-made.

Info Sources and Tickets

Amsterdam keeps no secrets about arts events from the uninitiated: There are posters up all over town all the time; fliers in bars, cafes, and restaurants; and a general sharing of knowledge that you don't necessarily find in other cities. Just walk into a bar, a cafe, or a club and ask whoever's on hand what's going on. Both the city tourist office, **VVV** Amsterdam (tel 0900/400-4040 9am–5pm weekdays [55 euro cents/65¢ per min.]; offices at Platform 2 inside Centraal Station and Stationsplein 10 in front of Centraal Station, 9am–5pm daily; and Leidseplein 1, 9am–7pm daily), and the government-sponsored **AUB Uitburo** (tel 0900/0191 or 020/621-1288 [40 euro cents/45¢ per min.]; www.uitlijn.nl; Leidseplein 26, daily 9am–9pm) give info by telephone or on the spot, and sell tickets to just about everything going on in town (advance telephone/Internet reservations cost 3€/$3.45 per ticket; 2€/$2.30 at the AUB ticket window).

Getting tickets in Amsterdam is a straightforward, democratic affair: Either they're available or they're not. Ticket scalping is practically unknown, so don't count on last-minute purchases on the steps of a concert hall. The best thing to do is to get hold of entertainment listings and make reservations before leaving the United States. You can do this by contacting either the VVV or the Uitburo.

The June **Holland Festival** (tel 020/530-7110; see p. 259) publishes its own free newsletter in Dutch and English. Buy festival tickets through the Uitburo, VVV, National Reservations Center (tel 0299/689-144), or at the venues where performances are held. Various season-ticket packages for the festival are sold and should be ordered before mid-April, preferably by mail, through the Uitburo or the NRC.

Three English-language magazines are good sources for entertainment listings: ***Day by Day,*** a strait-laced monthly tourism and entertainment magazine from the VVV; ***Shark,*** a fringe free-sheet; and ***Gay & Night Magazine,*** written by and for gay hipsters. For movie listings, buy a Dutch daily or pick up one of the leaflets or free movie magazines from the movie theaters themselves.

Though Amsterdam is an expensive city, ticket prices are reasonable compared to other European capitals. For example, Holland Festival tickets run about 12€ to 25€ ($14–$29) per event (or about 10€–15€/$12–$17 if you buy a season-ticket package). Movie prices average 8€ ($9.20), while rock concerts will set you back anywhere from 6€ ($6.90) for unknowns to 40€ to 50€ ($46–$58) for top names. Jazz and classical concerts average about 15€ to 25€ ($17–$29), but can top 60€ ($69) at places like the Concertgebouw. For info on jazz (also see the Nightlife chapter), call 020/770-0660 or visit www.jazz-in-amsterdam.nl. Opera tickets, at 12€ to 50€ ($14–$58), are considerably cheaper than in London or Paris for performances of comparable quality.

The Lowdown

Classical sounds... Classical-music lovers will be in Beethoven's seventh heaven in Amsterdam, where concerts are abundant, relatively cheap, and of world-class quality.

Musicians perform all over town—in parks, churches, clubs, concert halls, piano factories, etc.—and audiences are enthusiastic and savvy. Contemporary classical is a particular specialty, the Dutch being among Europe's greatest fans of new and challenging musical creations in the classical domain. The excellent **Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra),** currently under the baton of Riccardo Chailly, plays at the **Concertgebouw,** an 1888 neoclassical hall south of Singelgracht whose acoustics are so perfect you can hear every atonal instant of the contemporary pieces recently added to the repertoire. Guest performances by the world's best—from the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic orchestras, to the Borodin Quartet or Frans Bruggen's Orchestra of the 18th Century—make this among Europe's most vibrant concert venues. Chailly's taste for contemporary composers (Nono, Berio) has been a breath of fresh air after the departure of his Brahms-obsessed predecessor, Bernard Haitink, but the ensemble has a vast range, and Bruckner and Mahler remain its fortes.

The **Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest (Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra)** and its spinoff **Nederlands Kamerorkest (Netherlands Chamber Orchestra),** potentially first-rate ensembles that had been handicapped by administrative struggles and constant shifts from one base to another, now have a permanent home in the **Beurs van Berlage,** Amsterdam's former stock exchange. This Dutch Art Nouveau landmark, just a few hundred yards from Centraal Station, was successfully remodeled to improve acoustics. Though used almost exclusively for dance and opera, the **Muziektheater,** the artsy half of Amsterdam's 1980s city hall/opera complex, hosts free lunchtime chamber music concerts by the Netherlands Philharmonic, the Netherlands Ballet Orchestra, or the choir of the Netherlands Opera. Bach is the mainstay at the **Bachzaal,** part of the New South's Sweelinck Conservatorium, where accomplished students and professionals stage chamber music performances. At **Felix Meritis** (also known as the **Shaffy Theater**), a 200-year-old theater on Keizersgracht, you can listen to a variety of classical and baroque music (and attend musico-cultural

seminars and conferences). **Cristofori,** a vast piano showroom and restoration workshop with a fifth-floor concert hall, puts on classical and contemporary classical performances by an international mix of top-flight and fledgling musicians.

Music for the masses... Churches are particularly active venues for classical music. The **Waalse Kerk,** a rather unspectacular French Huguenot church in the Red-Light District, is now a vibrant venue for organ concerts (on a celebrated rococo Christian Müller organ) and baroque music, sometimes performed by top local and international talents. One of the most spectacular organs in town is at the **Nieuwe Kerk,** the 600-year-old Gothic "New Church" on the Dam. Architect Jacob van Campen designed the instrument in the mid-1600s, and it is played regularly by highly regarded resident organist Gustav Leonhardt as well as by visiting performers. The landmark **Westerkerk** has a gorgeous 1686 organ with scenes of David dancing before the Ark painted on its shutters, but its more modest choir organ is usually used for Bach cantatas and other performances. The city's only Golden Age wooden church, the **Amstelkerk,** overlooking Reguliersgracht and Prinsengracht canals, hosts chamber music, songs from the Middle Ages, and recitals, while the oldest church in town, the **Oude Kerk,** in the middle of the Red-Light District, is another splendid setting for organ and classical music. Corelli, Bach, Handel, and Purcell are played regularly by local and visiting ensembles at the gorgeous and acoustically stunning 1392 **De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church)** in the Begijnhof, where in the summer months free lunchtime concerts are added to the musical calendar. (See the Diversions chapter for more about Nieuwe Kerk, Westerkerk, Oude Kerk, and De Engelse Kerk.)

Modern sounds... Wear black, smoke plenty, and don't shave when you visit **De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum,** a distinctly hip venue dedicated to ear-boggling tonal and atonal contemporary work. From postfusion jazz to concertos for pianoforte and tape to electrified 12-tone Schoenberg, this is strictly 20th-century, angular stuff. Some of it is outstanding, while much is strictly for initiates. But even if you

don't pop for tickets (which aren't very expensive), hang out in the cafe or on the terrace overlooking the Amstel River and be entertained by the self-consciously arty regulars. De IJsbreker also coproduces contemporary music concerts at **Artis Planetarium,** in the 19th-century Artis Zoo complex. **Cristofori,** a big piano repair and sales operation, offers contemporary music (and jazz) at its fascinating workshop-concert hall on Prinsengracht. Performers include Wong Wing Tsan, Niek von Dosterum, and Deborah Carter. One of the myriad activities at **Melkweg**—a groundbreaking, 28-year-old multimedia cultural center, theater, club, and art gallery just off Leidseplein (see "On the fringe," below)—is musical performance—everything from world music to indefinable contemporary works by local bands to classic or experimental jazz.

Paradiso (see the Nightlife chapter), a deconsecrated church off Leidseplein, keeps you guessing with its eclectic lineup. Part dance club and major rock venue, it also books jazz, occasional classical music performances, and learned music conferences. **Westergasfabriek,** a converted gas plant in a former industrial complex in northwestern Amsterdam, is similarly eclectic, filling its music calendar with experimental jazz, pop, rock, and DJs. The cheapest, airiest concert venue of all is **Vondelpark** (see the Getting Outside chapter), a lovely 19th-century park where musicians of all kinds—from modern minstrels to execrable bongo players and tone-deaf guitarists—perform daily in summer among the greenery, especially at or around the domed Koepel music stand in the center of the park, about 137m (449.37 ft.) from the entrance on Van Eeghenstraat. When big crowds are anticipated for rock stars, teen idols, and so on, the **ArenA** soccer stadium in the southern suburbs is the top mega-venue.

Kitsch concertos... The fantastically ornate **Tuschinski Theater,** a 1921 Art Deco cinema near Rembrandtplein that books mostly mainstream first-run features, spends many of its Saturday mornings mounting tributes to the cinema's glorious past. Typically, a great silent film from the 1920s fills the screen while an organist cranks up the old Wurlitzer to evoke the proper mood. Restored top to bottom in 2001 and 2002, the setting is Saturday-matinee

opulence: marble panels, tiled floors, velvet seats, and lots of freshly polished brass and bronze. You can even reserve a special loge and sip champagne. Similar musical fare is served Sunday afternoons in the Jordaan at the Pianola Museum (see the Diversions chapter), the coziest museum in town, where player-piano lovers congregate in a front-room brown cafe to listen to any of the 35 old pianolas.

Theater you can understand, sort of... At **Badhuis Theater de Bochel,** a former bathhouse near the Oosterpark, an evening can be exhilarating or baffling when experimental works are performed. A variety of languages are used—sometimes in the same performance—so unless you're polyglot, stick to the visiting American and British companies (though the quality of productions varies widely). Multiethnicity is the byword at the aptly named **Cosmic Theater** smack in the heart of Old Amsterdam, where some of the Third World companies (theater groups from developing world countries) perform in English. Visiting mainstream and experimental American or British theater troupes—some known, others up and coming—sometimes perform at **Transformatorhuis Toneelgroep Amsterdam.** The setting is industrial-chic: a converted former electrical plant on the western edge of town. Most of these productions are not in English.

What's opera, doc?... The choice is simple: the **Muziektheater,** a fascinatingly hideous complex built in 1986 and nicknamed "Stopera" (rhymes with "opera") when activists tried unsuccessfully to stop its construction, and that of the neighboring city hall, or Stadhuis. They combined the two in a brilliant slogan, "Stop the Stopera," a campaign that ultimately ran into clouds of tear gas and forests of vigorously wielded police batons and retired from the field in defeat. Locals may rue the way the venue looks, but the **Netherlands Opera** company, reinvigorated by director Pierre Audi, is winning kudos for everything from Monteverdi to world premieres by unknown Dutch talents. The tickets are unusually cheap, considering the quality. Check *Day by Day* for visiting opera companies performing in a variety of Amsterdam venues.

Men in tights... The **Muziektheater** is also the city's top dance venue, home to the **Netherlands National Ballet** and its ballet orchestra and choir. This company is rated among Europe's best and has helped enhance the Muziektheater's status, making an unpopular building a success. Celebrated for performances of works by Balanchine, it also has a strong reputation in contemporary Dutch ballet (especially creations by choreographer Hans van Manen), as well as in classic crowd pleasers. The top international dance companies perform here, too, and the stage is vast. **Bellevue Theater,** a large theater near Leidseplein with three halls, features dance performances by up-and-coming local companies, with a slant toward minimalist modern works. Amsterdam's municipal theater, the **Stadsschouwburg,** has been opening its Leidseplein stage to cutting-edge Dutch contemporary dance. The setting is stunning: a gorgeous horseshoe-shaped auditorium with gilt colonnades, red velvet, and dozens of chandeliers. Another handsome late-1800s theater, the **Carré Theater,** on the Amstel River just south of the Magere Brug, is primarily for cabaret and musicals (in Dutch), but big-name dance companies (Pina Bausch, for example) and occasional folk-dancing groups make it a viable hall for non–Dutch speakers.

Fans of multicultural dance—African, Asian, South American, and combinations thereof—should head for one of two venues. At the **Cosmic Theater,** the "Cosmic Instants" programs—each a collection of 20-minute works by 8 to 10 choreographers—can be fascinating. Similar multiethnic dance and movement performances can be found at the beautiful **Tropeninstituut** and **Soeterijn**—two halls inside the Tropenmuseum (Tropical Museum) near Oosterpark. Amateurs and accomplished modern dancers perform their sometimes-inspired, sometimes-embarrassing creations at the **Dans Werkplaats Amsterdam (Amsterdam Dance Workshop),** just north of Vondelpark. More of the same goes on at **Veemtheater,** in a warehouse beyond Westerdok. It's great if you're keen on experimental dance, body movement, and mime theater, but the uninitiated will feel lost. Captivating contemporary dance performances are among the many things going on at **Melkweg,** a pioneering multimedia cultural center (see "On the fringe," below).

On the fringe... By their nature, fringe theater, music, dance, and combinations thereof pose a challenge in any language, so you may enjoy them even more in indecipherable Dutch (actually, some performances are at least partially in English). Thirty years ago, **Melkweg** (its name, which means Milky Way, derives from its location in a former dairy) was the wildest, most cosmic club/theater/art gallery in Amsterdam. Over the decades it has grown ideologically away from flower power toward a savvy hipness, becoming part of an international network of multimedia cultural centers, and it has spilled into a series of separate spaces—a regular cafe and smoking coffee shop (where hash-laced goodies are sometimes available), a bar and restaurant, an art center, a dance and movement theater, a cinema, a music venue, and a dance club (see the Nightlife chapter). The scene is mixed: punks, artists, businesspeople, and the occasional lost socialite. And though it has moved steadily into the mainstream, Melkweg can still shock with lunatic dance, music, and performance art. **OCCII,** which in pre-gentrification days was one of many abandoned buildings near Vondelpark that had been seized by squatters, is now a bar, club, and performance venue where locals bash out electrified sounds and fling themselves into crazy cabaret or stand-up comedy acts. **Badhuis Theater de Bochel,** set in a reconverted bathhouse near Oosterpark, offers wild experimental theater, dance, and music that might leave you feeling wrung out. Out on the western edge of town, the former gas plant **Westergasfabriek** favors experimental theater that's hip but tame. Read *Shark* for the current, ever-changing roster of theaters and clubs on the fringe.

Life is a gamble... The **Holland Casino,** the city's only legit casino, is a slice of Vegas. Join the bus-tour and provincial-Dutch set for a bit of gaming in smoke-filled rooms overlooking the Singelgracht at Leidseplein.

Life is a cabaret... The **Boom Chicago Theater,** an American improv troupe, landed in Amsterdam about 10 years ago, and contrary to everybody's expectations (and I mean *everybody*), it has not only survived but thrived by making fun of Dutch customs and language, and generally appealing to youngish tourists from America and Britain. They have a permanent venue, Leidseplein Theater, and

even publish their own quarterly, *Boom!,* which they claim is written by "outsider insiders." Hmmm. We've all seen their brand of entertainment before: determinedly wild and wacky guys and gals riffing, rather tamely, off reactions of a mostly embarrassed and bemused audience (do they ever get repeat visitors?). The food (veggie sandwiches, Sunday brunch specials) will transport you right home. It's usually kind of fun and the food's quite good, but neither aspect is to die for, though a few years back *Time* magazine compared it to Chicago's famous Second City comedy troupe. The competition, **Comedy Cafe Amsterdam,** hails and hah-hah-hahs from a modern shopping mall behind the Holland Casino. The standup- and improvmeisters here are American, British, or Dutch. It's a mixed bag of chuckles, guffaws, and groans, washed down by suds (and, if you're daring, accompanied by delicacies such as meat pastries or turkey tournedos swimming in mustard-dill sauce). Altogether different, pricier, and immeasurably more pretentious **The Supperclub,** a true end-of-the-empire restaurant-club-cabaret, is where the rich, beautiful and brain-dead stretch out on Roman-style couches in a clinical white interior and spend hours choking down mediocre food while watching videos, fashion shows, and the like. A masseuse shows up to help massage down the grub and prepare you to disgorge about 60€ ($69) for the "entertainment."

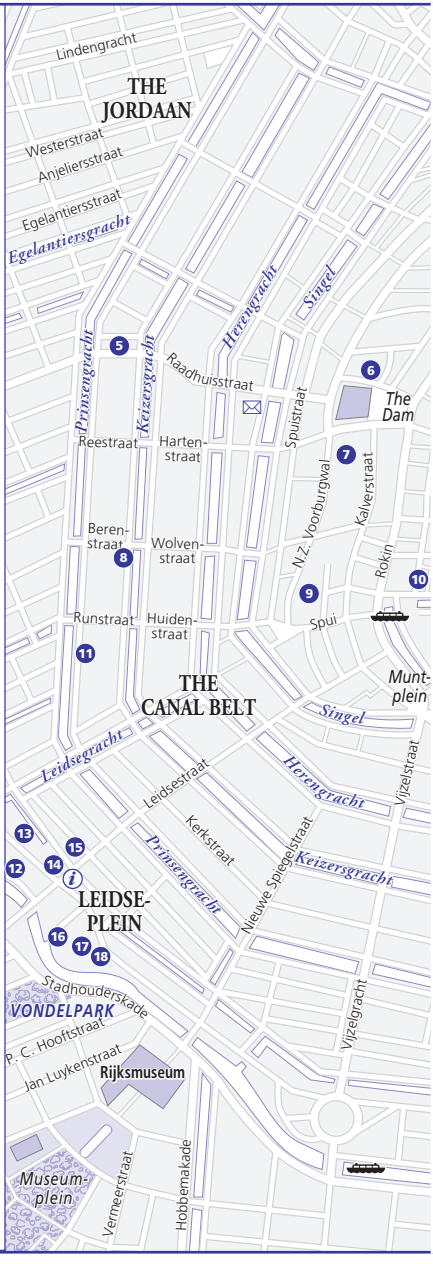
The sporting life... In Amsterdam, **Ajax** is neither a scrubbing powder nor a Trojan war hero: It's the name of the local *voetball* (soccer) club, which thrilled fans in 1995 by winning the European championship. A dominant European force in the early 1970s, the franchise slumped for about a decade before rejoining the game's elite in the late 1980s. Their 1995 title inspired fans to go on a rampage, breaking windows, looting, and attacking bystanders around Leidseplein, behavior that might send any team into a decade-long slump, maybe even intentionally. Indeed, Amsterdammers as a whole are enthusiastic boosters, and tend to go berserk—dancing in the streets, drinking even more than usual, and making lots of noise—whenever their local heroes win. And win they sometimes

still do—Ajax is among Europe's most unpredictable teams. The team has settled into its 51,000-seat, high-tech **ArenA** stadium, in the southwest suburbs, and regularly draws capacity-plus crowds. The stadium—now a tourist and soccer fan mecca—is like a minicity and shopping center. It features about 50 food stands (mostly burgers and pizza), the Soccer World restaurant (there's a giant soccer-ball pattern on the floor and a bank of TV monitors), a gift and souvenir boutique, and two giant video screens in the mall-like inner halls (so you won't miss a second of the action, even if you are on your way to the can). To pay for your fun, use cash or a credit card to buy an ArenA Card (you don't pay with cash at the stadium but must first buy an ArenA card, for between 7.50€ and 20€/$8.65–$23, and use this to make purchases). The Amsterdam **RAI** still exists as a large conference and sporting hall about 2 miles south of central Amsterdam, though the ArenA has largely overshadowed its events.

Amsterdam also boasts professional teams in second-rate knockoffs of a few favorite American pastimes. The Amsterdam **Admirals** challenged for the 1995 championship title in the World League of American Football and have continued to perform admirably since. They bid farewell to the crumbling 1924 Olympic Stadium following their 1996 season (May–June) and have joined Ajax at the new Amsterdam ArenA. Nonetheless, the sport just doesn't seem to be catching on, golly gosh. Likewise, only a few thousand ticket buyers—mostly American expats and curious young locals—litter the stands any weekend from May to September when Amsterdam's **Pirates,** among the top baseball teams in the Netherlands, take the field at Sportpark Jan van Galen in Bos en Lommer, a western suburb. Amsterdam's basketball team, inexplicably named **Finish Profiles Amsterdam,** or more commonly just "Amsterdam," can also boast of being among the best in the Netherlands. You can imagine what the competition's like. Their squad of American and European pros plays Saturday evenings, from September to April, at the Apollohal in the New South neighborhood, south of Vondelpark.

Map 21: Central Amsterdam Entertainment

- Amstelkerk **25**
- Bellevue Theater **12**
- Beurs van Berlage **19**
- Boom Chicago Theater **15**
- Comedy Cafe Amsterdam **17**
- Cosmic Theater **10**
- Cristofori **11**
- De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church) **9**
- Felix Meritis (aka the Shaffy Theater) **8**
- Holland Casino **16**
- Melkweg (Milky Way) **13**
- Muziektheater **24**
- Nederlands Kamerorkest (Netherlands Chamber Orchestra) **19**
- Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest (Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra) **19**
- Netherlands National Ballet **24**
- Netherlands Opera **24**
- Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) **6**
- Oude Kerk (Old Church) **20**
- Paradiso **18**
- Shaffy Theater **8**
- Stadsschouwburg (Municipal Theater) **14**
- The Supperclub **7**
- Tuschinski Theater **23**
- Waalse Kerk **21**
- Westerkerk **5**



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Canal tour boats
Information
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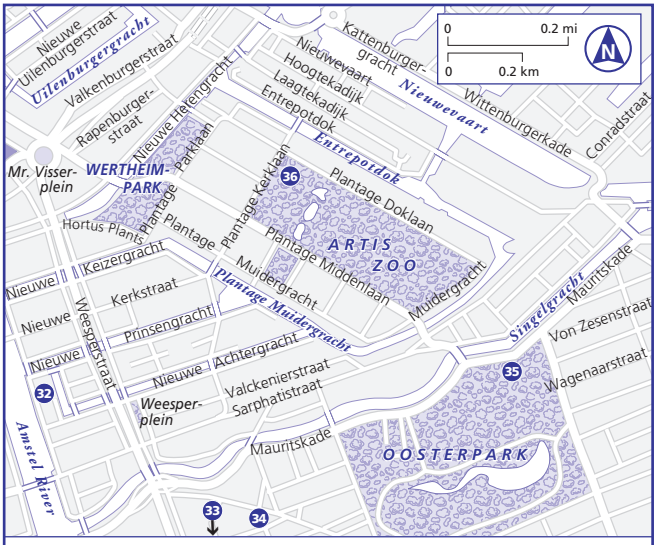
De Ruijterkade
Centraal Station
Openbaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
THE CENTER
Damrak
Nieuwendijk
Zeedijk
Warmoesstraat
19
20
Oudekerks-plein
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Geldersekade
Kromme Waal
Oude Waal
Wadis Eilandsgracht
Oosterdok
IJ-Tunnel
Nieuwmarkt
Schans
Oude
Prins Hendrikkade
21
RED-LIGHT DISTRICT
Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat
Uilenburgergracht
Hoogtekadijk
Oudezijds Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Entrepotdok
Plantage Doklaan
Waterloo-plein
24
Mr. Visserplein
Herengracht
Nieuwe
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
ARTIS
23
REMBRANDT-PLEIN
Amstel River
Keizersgracht
Plantage Muidergracht
Nieuwe
Kerkstraat
Nieuwe
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
Nieuwe
Kerkstraat
Utrechtsstraat
25
Weesperstraat
Nieuwe
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Falckstraat
Frederiks-plein
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Wibautstraat
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat

Map 22: Southern Amsterdam Entertainment

Bachzaal **29**
Concertgebouw **28**
Dans Werkplaats Amsterdam **27**
Finish Profiles Amsterdam (aka Amsterdam) **30**
Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra) **28**
OCCII **26**
RAI **31**

Nieuwe Spiegelstraat
Singelgracht
Halsstraat
Frans
Ruysdaelkade
Boerenwetering
Hobbemakade
Stadhouderskade
Rijksmuseum
Horststraat
Pieter de Hoochstraat
Vermeerstraat
Museumplein
Paulus Potterstraat
Jan Luykenstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Max Weberstraat
Frans van Ruysdaelstraat
Nicolaes Maesstraat
Eerste Constantijn Huygensstraat
P. C. Hooftstraat
Jacob Obrechtstraat
Reijner Vinkeleskade
Noorder Amstel Kanaal
Apollolaan
Jan van Eijckstraat
Schubertstraat
Beethovenstraat
Ruebensstraat
Minervalaan
Michelangelostraat
Veenstraat
Gerrit v.d.
Stadionkade
Zuider Amstel Kanaal
Prinses Irenestraat
Ringwegzuid
Overtoom
Hartvlietstraat
Wieringenstraat
Churchillaan
Amstelkade
Jozef Israelskade
Amstel Kanaal
Helfermanswegh
Herman
Diepenbrockstraat
Stadionweg
Richard Wagnerstraat
BEATRIXPARK
Celsiusplaats
Overtoom
Helenastraat
Vondelpark
VONDELPARK
Willemsparkweg
Van Eeghenstraat
Van Baerlestraat
Valeriusstraat
Johannes Verhulststraat
Emmastraat
De Lairessestraat
Jan van Goyenkade
Titiaanstraat
Olympiaplein
SPORTPARK OLYMPIAPLEIN
Stadionweg
Watteaustraat
Parnassusweg
Leidsche Rijn
Leidsche Rijn

Map 23: Eastern Amsterdam Entertainment



Artis Planetarium **36**
Badhuis Theater de Bochel **34**
CarréTheater **32**
De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum **33**
Soeterijn **35**
Tropeninstituut **35**

The Index

Admirals (p. 241) SOUTHEAST The city's American-style football team plays home games on Saturdays April through June. They now play at the ArenA stadium complex.... *Tel 020/465-0550. See listing for ArenA below for directions. Tickets 22€–47€ ($25–$54).*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 4.

Ajax (p. 240) SOUTHEAST Amsterdam's much-loved soccer team, winners of the 1995 European Cup and fully expected by optimistic locals to win again. They're at ArenA too... *Tel 020/311-1444. www.ajax.nl. See listing for ArenA below for directions. Tickets 22€–47€ ($25–$54).*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 4.

Amstelkerk (p. 235) CANAL BELT This Golden Age church overlooking Reguliersgracht and Prinsengracht canals hosts classical music, recitals, songs from the Middle Ages, and chamber music.... *Tel 020/622-0774. Amstelveld 2 at Prinsengracht. Tram 4 to Prinsengracht. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 25.

ArenA (p. 236, 241) SOUTHEAST A high-tech stadium with a sliding roof. Ajax and the Admirals play here. There are also major rock performances held here.... *Tel 020/311-1333. www.amsterdam arena.nl. ArenA Boulevard 1 at Amsterdam Zuidoost. Metro trains 50, 54 to Strandvliet/ArenA or Bijlmer. Stadium complex open daily from 9am–6pm (hours vary on soccer or football match days and during rock concert performances). Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 4.

Artis Planetarium (p. 236) EAST Part of the 19th-century Artis Zoo complex, this handsome, functioning planetarium sometimes hosts interesting, quality concerts, especially contemporary works.... *Tel 020/523-3452. www.artis.nl. Plantage Kerklaan 38–40 at Plantage Middenlaan. Trams 9, 14 to Plantage Kerklaan; 6 to Plantage Doklaan. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 36.

Bachzaal (p. 234) NEW SOUTH Part of the Sweelinck Conservatorium, this hall hosts regular chamber-music performances by students and professionals. The quality varies widely. Cheap.... *Tel 020/664-7641. Bachstraat 7 at Apollolaan. Trams 5, 24 to Gerrit van der Veenstraat. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 29.

Badhuis Theater de Bochel (p. 237, 239) EAST Visiting companies, sometimes American or British, put on a variety of professional and amateur acts at this former bathhouse, but many productions are in Dutch.... *Tel 020/668-5102. Andreas Bonnstraat 28 at Mauritskade. Tram 3 to Camperstraat. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 34.

Bellevue Theater (p. 238) LEIDSEPLEIN There are three halls in this theater, where the dance tends to be minimalist. You need to learn Dutch to appreciate most of its cabaret artists and theater companies.... *Tel 020/530-5301. Leidsekade 90 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 12.

Beurs van Berlage (p. 234) CENTER The former stock exchange, this Dutch Art Nouveau landmark by Hendrik Petrus Berlage is now a concert venue, the permanent home of the Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest and its offshoot, the Nederlands Kamerorkest.... *Tel 020/521-7575. Damrak 243 at Beursplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 19.

Boom Chicago Theater (p. 239) LEIDSEPLEIN This unsinkable American cabaret and improvisational theater company lives by a familiar formula: The audience dines, snacks, and drinks at candlelit tables while the fun-loving troupe plays for laughs in ever-changing yet predictable acts.... *Tel 020/530-7300. www.boomchicago.nl. Leidseplein Theater, Leidseplein 12. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Tickets 7.50€–9.50€ ($8.65–$11).*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 15.

Carré Theater (p. 238) EAST This 1887 wedding cake of a theater, long used as a circus venue, now hosts ribald Dutch cabaret and Dutch-language versions of British and American musicals. More comprehensible for English-only speakers are the big-name dance performances and the occasional high-spirited folk-dancing group.... *Tel 020/622-5225. www.theatercarre.nl. Amstel 115–125 at Nieuwe Prinsengracht. Trams 6, 7, 10 and Metro to Weesperplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 32.

Comedy Cafe Amsterdam (p. 240) LEIDSEPLEIN Stand-up and improv routines by an international grab bag of funmeisters.... *Tel 020/638-3971. www.comedycafe.nl. Max Euweplein 43–45 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Admission free.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 17.

Concertgebouw (p. 234) MUSEUM DISTRICT This acoustically impeccable 1888 venue is the permanent home of the rejuvenated Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest. Visiting performers include the world's best, and their work ranges as far off the beaten path as obscure saxophone concertos. Monthly schedule in English. Guided tours Sunday mornings at 9:30 (4€/$4.60). Reserve ahead.... *Tel 020/671-8345. www.concertgebouw.nl. Concertgebouwplein 2–6 at Museum District. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat; 16 to Museum District. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 28.

Cosmic Theater (p. 237, 238) CENTER Multiethnicity and multiculturalism are the grist for this multimedia mill, which offers avant-garde dance, theater, and combinations of same, mostly in Dutch, occasionally in English.... *Tel 020/622-8858. Nes 75 at Lange Brugsteeg. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 10.

Cristofori (p. 235, 236) CANAL BELT Piano repair and sales outfit with a surprising fifth-floor concert hall (classical, contemporary, and jazz).... *Tel 020/626-8495. www.cristofori.nl. Prinsengracht 581–583 at Leidsegracht. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Prinsengracht. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 11.

Dans Werkplaats Amsterdam (p. 238) WEST A dance workshop where local performers do their robotic, serpentine, contortionistic thing, while sympathetic aficionados look politely on.... *Tel 020/689-1789. Arie Biemondstraat 107B at Nicolas Beetsraat. Trams 1, 7, 17 to Jan Pieter Heijestraat. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 27.

De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church) (p. 235) CENTER This handsome little 1392 church in the Begijnhof offers up to four classical concerts a week, performed by accomplished Dutch and foreign ensembles. The setting is beautiful and relaxed, the acoustics are good, and the ticket prices reasonable.... *Tel 020/624-9665. Begijnhof 48 at Spui. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to Spui. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 9.

De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum (p. 235) EAST Challenging international atonal music is standard fare at this ultrahip venue on the Amstel River south of the Singelgracht. (Note that De IJsbreker is due to move to a new venue at the end of 2004, at the Muziekgebouw, under construction at this writing, just east of Centraal Station.) Check out the arty crowd in the cafe.... *Tel 020/668-1805. www.ysbreker.nl. Weesperzijde 23 at Ruyschstraat. Tram 3 to Ruyschstraat. Admission charged to concerts; cover 7.50€–13€ ($8.65–$14), bar free.*

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 33.

Felix Meritis (aka the Shaffy Theater) **(p. 234)** CANAL BELT Classical music, seminars, and conferences have revived the fortunes of this 1780s neoclassical theater long celebrated for its acoustics and unusual architecture.... *Tel 020/626-2321. www.felix.meritis.nl. Keizersgracht 324 at Berenstraat. Trams 1, 2, 5 to Spui. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 8.

Finish Profiles Amsterdam (aka Amsterdam) **(p. 241)** NEW SOUTH The city's basketball club, tops in the Netherlands, plays Saturday evenings from September to April.... *Tel 020/671-3910. Apollohal, Stadionweg 1–5 at Apollolaan. Tram 24 to Apollolaan. Tickets 5€–15€ ($5.75–$17).*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 30.

Holland Casino **(p. 239)** LEIDSEPLEIN Amsterdam's only officially recognized casino, full of bus-tour groups and provincial Dutch.... *Tel 020/521-1111. www.hollandcasino.nl. Lido complex on Singelgracht at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Open 1:30pm–3am. Admission 3.50€ ($4).*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 16.

Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra) **(p. 234)** MUSEUM DISTRICT This top-notch orchestra, which excels at Bruckner and Mahler, has recently added contemporary atonal work to its broad repertoire. Find it at the Concertgebouw, the 1888 hall that lends the ensemble its name.... *Tel 020/671-8345. www.concertgebouw.nl. Concertgebouwplein 2–6 at Museum District. Trams 2, 3, 5, 12 to Van Baerlestraat; 16 to Museum District. Ticket prices vary. See listing for Concertgebouw.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 28.

Melkweg (Milky Way) **(p. 236, 238, 239)** LEIDSEPLEIN A perpetually hip multimedia cultural center, which first opened its doors in 1970, with a smoking coffee shop, a bar and restaurant, an art center, a dance and movement theater, a cinema, a music venue, and a dance club.... *Tel 020/531-8181. www.melkweg.nl. Lijnbaansgracht 234A. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Cover 5€–13€ ($5.75–$14); special events can cost up to 30€ ($36); plus 2.50€ ($2.90) monthly club membership.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 13.

Muziektheater **(p. 234, 237, 238)** WATERLOOPLEIN Multipurpose dance theater and opera house, home to the Netherlands National Ballet and Orchestra and Pierre Audi's highly acclaimed Netherlands Opera company. This is where top international dance and opera companies perform. Each week, for most of the year, it also hosts free lunchtime chamber music concerts (Boekmanzaal, Tues 12:30pm, Oct–June).... *Tel 020/625-5455. www.muziektheater.nl. Amstel 3 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 and Metro to Waterlooplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 24.

Nederlands Kamerorkest (Netherlands Chamber Orchestra) **(p. 234)** CENTER This offshoot of the Nederlands Philharmonisch often attracts top international soloists.... *Tel 020/627-1161. Damrak 213 at Beursplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 19.

Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest (Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra) **(p. 234)** CENTER This reputable ensemble boasts world-class performances now that it's settled permanently at the Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam's former stock exchange.... *Tel 020/627-1161. Damrak 243 at Beursplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Ticket prices vary. See Beurs van Berlage.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 19.

Netherlands National Ballet **(p. 238)** WATERLOOPLEIN This top-flight company, most renowned for its stagings of Balanchine, makes its home at the Muziektheater in the modern city hall complex.... *Tel 020/551-8225, box office 020/625-5455. www.het-nationale-ballet.nl. Amstel 3 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 and Metro to Waterlooplein. Ticket prices vary. See Muziektheater.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 24.

Netherlands Opera **(p. 237)** WATERLOOPLEIN Everything from old standbys to risky world premieres have won high praise since director Pierre Audi took over this company. The opera performs at the Muziektheater.... *Tel 020/551-8922 info, box office 020/625-5455. www.dno.nl. Amstel 3 at Waterlooplein. Trams 9, 14 and Metro to Waterlooplein. Ticket prices vary. See Muziektheater.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 24.

Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) **(p. 235)** CENTER This 600-year-old Gothic church on the Dam is now primarily an art and cultural center; its spectacular 17th-century organ is used regularly for concerts by top performers.... *Tel 020/626-8168. The Dam. Trams 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 25 to the Dam. Admission charged (price varies) to events.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 6.

OCCII **(p. 239)** VONDELPARK Laid-back fringe venue, beyond Vondelpark. You're likely to see off-the-wall cabaret or stand-up acts by unknowns, and hear unclassifiable music produced by young Amsterdammers.... *Tel 020/671-7778. Amstelveenseweg 134 at Vondelpark. Tram 2 to Amstelveenseweg. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 26.

Oude Kerk (Old Church) **(p. 235)** RED-LIGHT DISTRICT A 13th- or 14th-century church that often holds organ and classical music concerts.... *Tel 020/625-8284. Oudekerksplein 23 at Oudezijds Voorburgwal. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 20.

Paradiso (p. 236) LEIDSEPLEIN Among the city's top music venues, this deconsecrated old church has a cafe/club out front and a large performance area in what used to be the nave.... *Tel 020/623-7348. Weteringschans 6–8 at Leidseplein. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 18.

Pirates (p. 241) WEST The city's baseball team plays Saturday and Sunday from May to September at a ball field in the western suburbs.... *Tel 020/616-2151. Sportpark Jan van Galen, Jan van Galenstraat 254 at Jan Tooropstraat, Bos en Lommer. Tram 13 to Jan Tooropstraat. Tickets 3.50€ ($4).*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 1.

RAI (p. 241) NEW SOUTH This vast exhibition center in the southern suburbs hosts everything from international boat shows to occasional rock and classical music concerts, though it has been largely eclipsed by the ArenA.... *Tel 020/644-8651. Europaplein 12 at Rooseveltlaan. Tram 4 to Europaplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 22 on p. 244, bullet 31.

Shaffy Theater See Felix Meritis.

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 8.

Soeterijn See Tropeninstituut.

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 35.

Stadsschouwburg (Municipal Theater) (p. 238) LEIDSEPLEIN Unfortunately, all theater productions are in Dutch at Amsterdam's main theater, but there are frequent contemporary dance performances.... *Tel 020/624-2311. Leidseplein 26. Trams 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 to Leidseplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 14.

The Supperclub (p. 240) CENTER It started out as a postprovo anarchistic underground club and restaurant and has become an icon of end-of-the-empire Amsterdam decadence. Roman-style dining sofas, slinky fashion-model "waitresses," postfusion food on a huge tray, DJ music, fashion shows, dancing, cabaret.... *Tel 020/638-0513. www.supperclub.nl. Jonge Roelensteeg 21 at Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal. Trams 1, 2, 5, 14 to the Dam. Daily 8pm–midnight. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 7.

Transformatorhuis Toneelgroep Amsterdam (p. 237) WESTERN DOCKS This excellent municipal theater company plays at the Westergasfabriek on the western edge of town. Their performances are in Dutch, but the occasional visiting theater or dance company puts on works intelligible to English-speaking audiences.... *Tel 020/686-9735. Haarlemmerweg 8–10 at Westerpark. Tram 10 to Van Limburg Stirumplein; buses 18, 22 to Haarlempoort. Ticket prices vary. See Westergasfabriek.*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 2.

Tropeninstituut and Soeterijn (p. 238) EAST These Art Deco/Art Nouveau halls at the Royal Tropical Institute building (which houses the Tropenmuseum) stage dance, theater, music, and film dedicated to multiethnic, multicultural themes. Very PC.... *Tel 020/568-8711. Mauritskade 63 at Singelgracht. Trams 7, 9, 10, 14 to Mauritskade. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 23 on p. 246, bullet 35.

Tuschinski Theater (p. 236) REMBRANDTPLEIN An opulent restored 1921 Dutch Art Deco cinema—still a first-run theater—where an organ from silent-movie days is used for occasional concerts and to accompany silent films.... *Tel 020/626-2633. Reguliersbreestraat 26 at Rembrandtplein. Trams 4, 9, 14, to Rembrandtplein. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 23.

Veemtheater (p. 238) WESTERN DOCKS No language barrier here. This converted warehouse way out beyond Westerdok and the Western Islands now hosts experimental dance, movement, and mime theater. For contemporary dance aficionados.... *Tel 020/626-0112. Van Diemenstraat 410 at Houtmankade. Tram 3 to Zoutkeetsgracht; bus 35 to Van Diemenstraat. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 3.

Waalse Kerk (p. 235) RED-LIGHT DISTRICT This small, simple church set back from a canal is now a vibrant venue for organ concerts (on a celebrated rococo Christian Müller organ) and baroque music, sometimes performed by top names.... *Tel 020/623-2074. Oudezijds Achterburgwal 157 at Oude Hoogstraat. Trams 4, 9, 14, 16, 24, 25 to the Dam. Admission charged (prices vary) to most events.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 21.

Westergasfabriek (p. 236, 239) WESTERN DOCKS In the same former industrial complex as the Transformatorhuis (see above), this converted gas plant on the western edge of town is now a venue for experimental theater, live pop and rock, and DJ theme nights. There's also a hip bar and dinerlike restaurant.... *Tel 020/621-1211 or 020/581-0425. Haarlemmerweg 8–10 at Westerpark. Tram 10 to Van Limburg Stirumplein; buses 18, 22 to Haarlempoort. Admission charged for performances and dance nights (prices vary); admission to bar free.*

See Map 20 on p. 230, bullet 2.

Westerkerk (p. 235) CANAL BELT Organ music and Bach cantatas are a regular feature at this Golden Age landmark.... *Tel 020/624-7766. Prinsengracht 281 at Westermarkt. Trams 6, 13, 14, 17 to Westermarkt. Ticket prices vary.*

See Map 21 on p. 242, bullet 5.

HOTLINES & OTHER BASICS

Airport... Schiphol (pronounced *Skhip*-ol) is 13km (8.06 miles) from downtown Amsterdam—about 30 minutes by taxi or car, 25 minutes by train, or 12 to 55 minutes by hotel shuttle bus. It's one of the world's most convenient, efficiently run, and least unpleasant airports, handling more than 20 million passengers a year (only London, Paris, and Frankfurt are busier). It features hotels, a casino, sauna and meditation facilities, shopping, restaurants, and business meeting rooms. Security is state of the art, with iris scanners. For general information, call tel 0900/0141 (10 euro cents/12¢ per min.); customs tel 020/316-4700; lost luggage tel 020/601-2325. The website is www.schiphol.nl.

Airport transportation to downtown... Trains leave from the airport station to Amsterdam Centraal Station downtown 24 hours a day (every 15 minutes, 5am–1am; hourly 1–5am). Tickets cost about 2.60€ ($3) one-way (4.30€/$4.95 round-trip same day). Make sure you board a train to Amsterdam CS (Centraal Station). Note that trains do not originate at Schiphol; there are through trains to and from Rotterdam, Utrecht, and The Hague. Information: **Dutch Railways,** tel 0900/9292 for domestic trains; tel 0900/9296 for international trains. **Connexxion** (tel 0900/9292) runs a hotel **shuttle bus** every 20 minutes from 7am to 5pm, every 30 minutes from 5 to 7pm, and every hour from 7 to 9pm. Buy tickets on board (the fare is

8.50€/$9.80 one-way and 13€/$14 round-trip to contracted hotels, and 11€/$12 one-way and 19€/$22 round-trip to noncontracted hotels). It takes only 15 minutes to the Hilton from the airport, but almost an hour to the NH Barbizon Palace; going the opposite direction, the times are reversed. **Taxis** cost about 38€/$44 to central Amsterdam (tel 020/653-1000; www.schipholtaxi.nl).

Babysitters... Only one organization is approved by Amsterdam's tourist information office (known as the VVV; see "Visitor information," later in this chapter): **Oppascentrale Kriterion,** also called Onderlinge Studenten Steun (tel 020/624-5848; Valckenierstraat 45). It's been around since the 1950s, and employs male and female students over 18. Reserve by telephone 5:30 to 7pm daily. Babysitters will come to your hotel, but charge a slightly higher fee for the inconvenience. Most four- and five-star hotels will book babysitters for you through the concierge's desk.

Banks and exchange offices... Banking hours are usually 9am to 4 or 5pm weekdays. Most banks have foreign exchange offices. The **GWK** (Grenswisselkantoor) exchange offices in Centraal Station and at the main hall of the Schiphol Airport Railway Station are open 24 hours daily. In general, banks and GWK exchanges offer the best rates. Avoid other exchange offices (called Bureau de Change) charging high commissions. The most convenient GWK offices (open daily) are at Damrak 86 (8am–11:45pm), Leidseplein 123 (8am–midnight), and Kalverstraat 150 (8am–8pm). GWK offices also give cash advances on all major credit cards, and they are agents for Western Union (handy for emergency money transfers). GWK also sells telephone cards and *strippenkaart* tickets for city trams, buses, and the Metro. In a pinch, the often-crowded **Dutch Post Bank** at all post offices will exchange foreign currency. **ABN–AMRO** bank has an automatic banknote-exchange machine at Amsterdam's main central square, the Dam, at the corner of Damrak Street (open 24 hours daily); **Fortis Bank** offers the same service at Singel 548.

Car rentals... Rental cars are listed in the Yellow Pages under *"Autoverhuur";* international agencies are at Schiphol

Airport. Book from the U.S. for the best rates. **Avis:** tel 0800/235-2847 or 020/683-6061, Nassaukade 380. **Budget:** tel 020/612-6066, Overtoom 121. **Europcar:** tel 020/683-2123, Overtoom 197. **Hertz:** tel 020/201-3512, Overtoom 333. (Also see "Driving and parking," below.)

Consulates and embassies... All embassies are in The Hague. **Australian Embassy:** tel 070/310-8200, Carnegielaan 14. **British Embassy:** tel 070/427-0427, Lange Voorhout 10. **Canadian Embassy and Consulate:** tel 070/311-1600, Sophialaan 7. **Irish Embassy:** tel 070/363-0993, Dr. Kuyperstraat 9. **New Zealand Embassy:** tel 070/346-9324, Mauritskade 25. **United States Embassy:** tel 070/310-9209, Lange Voorhout 102. Also, in many cases, the U.S. and British consulates in Amsterdam are a good resource for visitors to the city. **U.S. Consulate:** tel 020/575-5309, Museum District 19. **British Consulate-General:** tel 020/676-4343, Koningslaan 44.

Currency... One euro is worth around US$1.15. Euro coins are: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 euro cents and 1 or 2 euros. The paper denominations are: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 euros.

Doctors and dentists... Consult the Dutch Yellow Pages under *"Tandarts"* for dentists (the Yellow Pages Visitors Guide, in English, is in most hotels). The **Dentists Referral Bureau** will refer you 24 hours daily to an approved practitioner (tel 020/592-3434). Doctors are listed under *"Artsenhuisartsen: dokters"* in the Dutch Yellow Pages. The **Centrale Doktersdienst** (tel 020/592-3434) is a 24-hour-daily referral service. For medical or dental emergencies call tel 112, 24 hours daily. (See "Emergencies and police," below.)

Driving and parking... The best advice on driving in Amsterdam is this: Don't drive in Amsterdam. Traffic is horrendous, the normally polite Dutch are demon drivers, and parking is nightmarish. If your car is parked illegally, it will be clamped or towed almost immediately by the dreaded Parkeerbeheer police, and you will need large amounts of cash to get it back (from about 68€–154€/$78–$177; call 020/553-0333 around the clock to recover

a towed vehicle). Drive on the right-hand side. You can leave your car for 5.70€ ($6.55) a day at the P+R lot at Amstel Station, south of town, served by taxis and by tram 12 and bus 15 (both run 6am–midnight weekdays, 6:30am–midnight Sat, and 7:30am–midnight Sun; the bus also has limited night service after midnight). For other P+R locations call tel 020/553-0333. A handful of hotels have garages; some upscale hotels offer a 1- or 3-day tourist parking pass (15€ and 45€/$17 and $52) allowing you to park on the street—if you can find a spot. You can also buy passes from the *Parkeerbeheer* (Parking Management Office): **Bakkerstraat 13** (near Rembrandtplein); **Nieuwezijds Kolk** (near Kolk garage); **Ceintuurbaan 159** (near Sarphatipark); **Kinkerstraat 17** (near police headquarters); and **Cruquiuskade 25** (on the northwest edge of town). A 1-week pass costs 106€ ($122). Parking meters are now ubiquitous: 2.80€ ($3.20) per hour Mon–Sat 9am–7pm, 1.70€ ($1.95) 7–11pm and Sun noon–11pm. Times and charges can vary in certain zones; check the meter for details. Some central city garages are: **Europarking BV** (tel 020/623-6694; Marnixstraat 250; Mon–Sat 6:30am–2am, Sun 7am–1am); **De Bijenkorf** (tel 020/621-8080; Beursplein/Damrak; Mon–Sat 9am–midnight); **Parking Plus** (tel 020/626-6141; Centraal Station, enter at 20A Prins Hendrikkade; 24 hours daily); **Kroon & Zn** (tel 020/638-0919; Waterlooplein 1); and **Parking Byzantium** (tel 020/616-6416; Tesselschadestraat 1g; 24 hours daily). Rates are about 2€ to 4€ ($2.30–$4.60) per hour.

Electricity... Dutch plugs are the same 220-volt European model used in Italy and France, with two small round poles. Hotels are not equipped for American plugs or appliances that use 110 to 120 volts.

Emergencies and police... For accidents, medical emergencies, burglaries, or fire, call the police, fire department, and ambulance 24 hours daily at tel **112.** The Amsterdam police central dispatcher is at tel 020/559-9111 or 0900/8844 or 0900/8844 (24 hours daily). The main police station is at Elandsgracht 117. Other police stations are at Lijnbaansgracht 219, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 118, Prinsengracht 1109, Singel 455, Van Leijenberghlaan 15, and Warmoesstraat 44.

Events information... AUB Uitburo (tel 020/621-1288 or 0900/0191 [40 euro cents/46¢ per min.]; www.uitlijn.nl; Leidseplein 26; daily 9am–9pm) is a one-stop entertainment ticketing agency and information office for music, dance, theater, and special events. The **VVV (Amsterdam Tourist Office,** see "Visitor information," later in the chapter) has an English-language info line that charges 55 euro cents (63¢) per minute (tel 0900/400-4040); find out about everything from concerts and theater programs to bike rentals and babysitters.

Festivals and special events

FEBRUARY: **Carnaval Mokum,** a popular festival, draws big crowds; the **1941 Dockers' Strike** is commemorated February 25.

MARCH: **HISWA te Water** national boat show at RAI convention center fills hotels (mid-month); the **Silent Procession (Stille Omgang)** of about 15,000 people marks the bizarre 1345 "Miracle of Amsterdam" of the fire-resistant Host (closest Sun to March 15).

APRIL: There's a 2-day celebration before and on **Queen's Day (Koninginnedag)**, April 30—book your hotel room several months ahead.

APRIL–MAY: **Tulip season.**

LATE MAY TO END OF AUGUST: The **Amsterdam Arts Adventure** features dance and music (see the Entertainment chapter for details).

JUNE: **RAI Arts Fair (KunstRAI)** is a major contemporary arts-and-crafts fair (early June); **Canal Run (Echo Grachtenloop),** the closest thing to a marathon, lopes along city canals (routes are 4.8, 9.7, and 17.7km/3, 6, and 11 miles; second Sun in June); the monthlong **Holland Festival** features theater, dance, and concert performances by major artists and companies (also in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht; see the Entertainment chapter for details).

AUGUST: **Uitmarkt,** held on the last weekend of the month, ushers in the fall concert/theater/opera season.

SEPTEMBER: **Flower Parade (Bloemencorso)** occurs the first week of the month, from Aalsmeer through town to the Dam (best review spots are Rembrandtplein and Vijzelstraat); on **National Monument Day**

(Monumentendag), usually the second Saturday of the month, landmark buildings are open to the public; **Jordaan Festival** features arts, crafts, and entertainment (second and third week of the month).

NOVEMBER: **St. Nicholas Parade/Santa Claus (Sinterklaas),** a kiddies' parade, runs from Centraal Station to the Dam, with Santa Claus and his sidekick Black Peter (Zwarte Piet). Held the second or third week of the month.

Gay and lesbian sources... The **Gay and Lesbian Switchboard** (tel 020/623-6565; www.switchboard.nl; 10am–10pm daily) offers English-language info and advice. Tune into **MNS Radio** (106.8 FM, 6–9pm daily) for up-to-the-minute info on gay events and issues. For advice and info from the government-subsidized **COC** (the **Dutch Gay and Lesbian Organization**), call or visit the local branch at Rozenstraat 14 (tel 020/626-3087; open Wed–Sat 1–5pm; English-speaking meetings; cafe). The COC's national branch is at Rozenstraat 8 (tel 020/623-4596; open Mon–Fri 9am–4pm). Call **AIDS Infolijn,** tel 0900/204-2040, for info on AIDS. ***Gay News,*** a monthly news and listings tabloid, is published in Dutch and English and is sold in bookstores, cafes, and clubs (www.gaynews.nl). ***Gay & Night Magazine,*** a monthly gay-events listings guide, is sold in many bookstores and at clubs and cafes. ***Shark,*** a twice-monthly giveaway, lists clubs, squats, music, film, and gay events.

Holidays... National holidays when businesses shut down are: **January 1** (New Year's Day); **Good Friday, Easter Sunday,** and **Easter Monday; April 30** (Queen's Day); **Ascension Day** (the 40th day after Easter); **Pentecost Sunday** and **Monday** (the seventh Sunday after Easter, and the following day); and **December 25** and **26** (Christmas).

Internet... Most hotels; many shops, museums, and galleries; and some restaurants and cafes are on the Internet. There are numerous Internet cafes or bars in town, most of them seedy (in smoking coffee shops). Two exceptions are: **The Internet Cafe** (tel 020/627-1052; www.internetcafe.nl; Martelaarsgracht 11) and **Freeworld Internetcafé** (tel 020/620-0902; www.freeworld-internetcafe.nl; Nieuwendijk

30). There are dozens of blue **"Internet Pillars"** on sidewalks, usually near telephone booths. They use KPN telephone cards. Surf the Web or receive messages (you cannot send e-mails). Instructions are in English: Insert card, "start" page appears onscreen, surf or go to "e-mail."

Language... Natives speak Dutch, but will not respond if you try to speak to them in Dutch; they speak better English than most native English speakers and are keen to demonstrate it. They cannot stand hearing their language miscoughed (coughing and spluttering are key to correct pronunciation; just try saying "Fan Ghchoaghch"—van Gogh). Most Dutch also speak French, German, and more. ***Warning:*** If you are a native English speaker do not attempt to speak German in Holland, or pronounce Dutch words as if they were German words. Dutch has a great deal in common with German, but it also resembles English, which the Dutch prefer to speak.

Newspapers... There is no English-language daily in Amsterdam, but the monthly *Day by Day* is widely available. Major British and American dailies and Sunday papers are sold at many newsstands. Readily available papers include *USA Today, International Herald Tribune,* and the *Wall Street Journal.* The best sources for these publications are: **Waterstone's** (Kalverstraat 152); **American Book Center** (Kalverstraat 185); **Kiosk** (Stationsplein 13, and other locations); **Centraal Station** newsstands; **AKO** (Rozengracht 21, and other locations); **Athenaeum Nieuwscentruum** (Spui 14); and **Bruna** (Leidsestraat 89). The main Amsterdam dailies are *Het Parool* (center-left afternoon paper); *NRC Handelsblad* (centrist, intellectual evening paper); *De Volkskrant* (Catholic, left-liberal morning paper); and *De Telegraaf* (right-wing morning rag).

Opening and closing times... Most shops are open 1 to 8pm Monday; 9am to 8pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; 9am to 9pm Thursday; and 9am to 5pm Saturday. Many businesses and shops are now also open on Sundays from noon to 5pm. Food shops generally open between 8 and 9am and close at 5 or 6pm (3pm Sat). Convenience or late-night shopping remains almost unknown, but there

are scattered Avondverkoop (evening sales) stores. A local Avondverkoopl store is a resource not to be ignored for keeping you stocked with things to munch after normal hours. Suppose you feel like an evening "at home" in your hotel, watching television or whatever, and you either don't fancy the room-service menu or your hotel doesn't provide this service. There is sure to be an evening sales store close to the hotel (ask at the front desk). Many can prepare take-out meals to about the same standard as you would find in a typical Dutch *eetcafe* (literally "eat cafe"—a cafe with eats), for 10% to 20% less than the restaurant price, and they often sell fresh delicatessen items. Opening times are usually from 5 to 11pm or midnight.

Passports and visas... American, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, and British citizens need only present a valid passport for stays of up to 3 months. No visas are required.

Post office... The main **PTT Post** office is at Singel 250 (tel 020/556-3311; open weekdays 9am–6pm, 9am–3pm Sat). The post office was privatized in 1997. For general information call tel 0800/0402. Stamps are sold at newsstands and tobacco shops; coin-operated stamp dispensers are attached to some mailboxes. For mail sent outside Amsterdam, use the slot marked *overige bestemmingen* (sometimes labeled FOREIGN COUNTRIES).

Public transportation... There are trams, buses, and a subway system (the Metro) running 6am to midnight. Night buses run Monday through Friday from 1 to 5:30am, and weekends from 1 to 6:30am (buses 73 to 76 serve central areas). There are no buses from midnight to 1am. The subway, only marginally useful, runs from Centraal Station to eastern and southern suburbs, with center-city stops at Nieuwmarkt, Waterlooplein, and Weesperplein. There are 16 tramlines (streetcars). Trams are the most useful, expedient, and popular form of transit. A punch-as-you-go strip ticket, called a *strippenkaart,* valid on all types of transit, is sold by drivers or conductors; at the GVB Tickets & Info office in front of the main train station; and at tobacco shops, post offices, and train station ticket windows. There are also passes for 1 hour, 1 day,

multiple days, 1 week, or 1 month, sold at the same places as other tickets. Tramline 5 and Metro cars have automatic ticket dispensers. On board the trams, a *strippenkaart* costs 1.40€ ($1.60) for two strips, 2.10€ ($2.40) for three strips, and 5.60€ ($6.45) for eight strips, or 4.30€ ($4.95) for a return ticket valid twice on the same day. Buy strip tickets at railway stations or GVB offices and they cost less per strip: 5.90€ ($6.80) for 15 strips, and 17€ ($20) for 45 strips. There are 11 fare zones in greater Amsterdam. Central-city rides cover one zone, requiring two strips; two zones require three strips (always one strip more than the total number of zones). Fold the ticket and time-stamp the strip corresponding to the length of your trip. Once stamped, the ticket is valid for 1 hour or more from the time stamped, for transfers to other trams, buses, and Metro lines. Upon request, drivers or conductors will stamp tickets and tell you when your stop comes up. Drivers cannot sell or stamp tickets on trams with conductors (numbers 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 25). For transfers to buses, board in front and show the driver your ticket. Ticket inspectors do spot checks; fines are 30€ ($35) plus the ticket price (info at tel 0900/9292). Day passes from 1 to 9 days cost from 5.20€ ($6) to 25€ ($29) (see the You Probably Didn't Know chapter for more on streetcars; also check out www.ov-info.nl and www.gvb.nl for more information). A minibus service, De Opstapper, links Centraal Station to the Stopera Opera House, via Prinsengracht (but this service might not continue).

Radio and TV stations broadcasting in English... Radio stations include **Voice of America for Europe,** at 99.1 MHz; **BBC World Service** at 101.3 MHz and 648 kHz on MW; and **BBC Radio 4** on 106.6 MHz, 198 kHz AM, and 1500 kHz LW. **CNN International, BBC 1, BBC 2, BBC World,** and **EuroNews** are available in most luxury hotels; some also offer **MTV** and **NBC Superchannel.**

Standards of measure... The Netherlands uses the metric system. Clothing size conversions are approximate at best and do not correspond to exact half measures. Clothing sizes: Women's Dutch sizes 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, and 46 correspond to U.S. 6/8, 10/11, 12/13, 14/15, 16,

and 18; women's shoes Dutch sizes 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41 equal U.S. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Men's shirts Dutch sizes 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, and 45 translate to U.S. 14.5, 15, 15.5, 15.5, 16, 16.5, 17, 17.5, and 18; men's shoes Dutch are 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 47 to U.S. sizes 7, 8, 8.5, 9, 10, 11, 11.5, 12, and 13.

Taxes and duty free... The murderously high value-added tax (called BTW) of 19% is included in the sales price of most consumer goods (some include only 6% VAT, as do restaurant and hotel bills). Tax-free shopping is possible (though more complicated than you'd think) for non-EU residents: You've got to spend 137€ ($158) or more in one day at one participating shop, then take your purchases out of the country within 3 months. You're actually refunded 13.5% to 14%, less a variable commission fee. Look for the "Europe Tax-Free Shopping" blue-and-gray logo (info@taxfree.nl) or the red-and-blue "Easy Tax Free" logo (www.easytaxfree.com) at participating shops; ask for a Global Refund Cheque when you make your purchases, get a customs officer at Schiphol or Centraal Station to stamp the "cheques" as you leave the country, then rush to the refund office at one of the ABN-AMRO banks in airport departures halls 1 and 3, or the GWK exchange office at the train station or in Schiphol Plaza Shopping Center. For information: tel 023/524-1909; fax 023/524-6164; info@taxfree.nl.

Taxis and limos... You can hail cabs in Amsterdam, but they are not obliged to stop. Best spots to flag a cab: an artery with a tram line, or central-city streets like Damrak, Rokin, Vijzelstraat, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, Raadhuisstraat, and Amstelstraat. Main taxi stands are at Centraal Station, the Dam, Leidseplein, Spui, Rembrandtplein, Westermarkt, and at the bus station on the corner of Marnixstraat and Kinkerstraat. **Taxi Centrale** (tel 0900/677-7777; 24 hours daily) is the central dispatcher for all of these. Radio taxis will pick you up anywhere; the meter runs once you board. Rates are 2.90€ ($3.35) to start, 1.80€ ($2.05) per kilometer (.62 miles) thereafter, and after 25km (15.5 miles) 1.30€ ($1.50) per kilometer (.62 miles); standing time is 32€ ($37) per hour. A ride from Centraal Station to a

hotel within the Singelgracht costs 8€ to 12€ ($9.20–$14). Baggage is free. Limousines are listed under *"Autoverhuur met chauffeur"* in the Yellow Pages. **Devries Business Limousines** (tel 020/669-3889; www.businesslimo.com) uses luxury cars and limos. **ETS** (tel 020/659-5333) offers luxury cars and minivans. The **Water Taxi** dock is in front of Centraal Station; they will pick you up at your hotel or restaurant (Water Taxi Centrale; Stationsplein 8; open 9am–1am daily; tel 020/535-6363; www.water-taxi.nl). Rates for one to eight passengers: 70€ ($81) for the first half-hour, 50€ ($58) per additional 30 minutes.

Telephones... The Amsterdam area code for calls within the Netherlands is 020; don't dial it inside the city. When calling from abroad, dial 31 (Netherlands), 20 (Amsterdam), then the subscriber's number. Some 0900 numbers cost 10 to 60 euro cents (12¢–70¢) per minute. **Telephone booths** are abundant and clearly marked KPN TELEKOM/TELEFOON or TELFORT. All use telephone or credit cards. Phone cards are sold at post offices and telephone centers, plus GWK exchange offices (note that KPN and Telfort cards do not work with the other companies' phones). Operating instructions are given in English: "Lift handset. Insert card. Dial number." To dial the United States or Canada, dial 001 plus the area code plus the subscriber's seven-digit telephone number. For Country Direct services press "special functions" and follow instructions displayed (the LCD screen allows you to select language and country code and displays the amount of credit on your phone card). To use a credit card, follow the same procedure, but dip your card. **Directory information:** tel 0900/8008; www.detelefoon gids.nl or www.kpn.com; for the **Yellow Pages:** www. goudengids.nl; **international info:** tel 0900/8418; **international collect calls:** tel 0800/0410. **MCI:** tel 0800/022-9122; **Sprint:** tel 0800/022-9119; **AT&T:** tel 0800/022-9111; **Canada Direct:** tel 0800/022-9116; **British Telecom:** tel 0800/022-9944; **mobile phone info:** tel 0800/0106.

Time... Amsterdam's time zone is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, 9 hours ahead of Pacific Time.

Tipping... Don't believe that the Dutch don't appreciate tips. Leave symbolic tips at cafes and bars (loose change, or 1€/$1.15 max). Leave about 10% at top restaurants (less if the bill is huge). Service is always included in the bill, but as in most European countries, the service charge goes to pay the waiter's miserable salary, so it's good form to leave at least a token tip. Taxi drivers get 1€ to 2€ ($1.15–$2.30) max. Hotel bell staff: 1€ to 3€ ($1.15–$3.45). Bathroom attendants: 25 to 50 euro cents (30¢–60¢).

Trains... Centraal Station (CS) is an unmistakable major landmark on Stationsplein (tel 0900/9292 for info 6:30am–10pm daily; tel 030/297-7240 for advance international tickets Mon–Fri 9am–6pm, Sat 10am–4pm, closed Sun). All Continental and (via the Channel Tunnel by Eurostar train) UK destinations are served. For international train info contact tel 0900/9296 or www.ns.nl.

Travelers with disabilities... Amsterdam is a difficult city for the disabled with its uneven pavements, old buildings with narrow stairways, and old buses and trams not equipped with "kneeling" apparatus (though some of the newer trams are being equipped). Metro cars are accessible unless your arms are immobilized. Most curbs are contoured for bikes, which means they're wheelchair-friendly. Museums, concert halls, and public buildings are generally accessible; phone ahead and assistance can be requested almost anywhere. Disabled-friendly hotels are lamentably rare. Best bets are luxury/business establishments. Call the **VVV** (see "Visitor information," below) for hotel addresses; fax your chosen hotel for details. **IHD Schiphol Service** will pick up disabled persons from trains, buses, or taxis and take them to and from their flight (tel 030/235-7822). **Netherlands Railways** (NS) distributes a free pamphlet on train travel for the disabled, plus timetables in Braille (sold at NS stations, or call tel 0900/9292); for free escort service at a train station call 24 hours ahead (tel 030/235-4661, 8:30am–2pm weekdays).

Visitor information... VVV (pronounced *fay-fay-fay*) is Amsterdam's official tourist office. VVV is what people say and what's on the official literature. No one—not even locals—knows what it stands for. (If you must know, it's

Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer, which roughly translates as the Association for Visitor Travel.) Its main info number (tel 0900/400-4040; www.visitamsterdam.nl; 9am–5pm weekdays) at 55 euro cents (65¢) per minute, often with a long wait, can get ridiculously expensive. Go in person to the VVV offices at Stationsplein 10 (in front of Centraal Station; 9am–5pm daily); inside Centraal Station, platform 2 (9am–5, 6, 7, or 8pm daily, depending on the time of year); and Leidseplein 1 (9am–7pm daily). Correspondence: VVV Amsterdam, Box 3901, 1001 AS Amsterdam. The **Netherlands Board of Tourism** (NBT) has offices in the **United States** at 355 Lexington Ave., 19th floor, New York, NY 10017, tel 212/370-7360, fax 212/370-9507; in **Canada:** 25 Adelaide St. E., Suite 710, Toronto, ON M5C 1Y2, tel 416/363-1577, fax 416/363-1470; and in **Britain:** (mail inquiries) P.O. Box 30783, London, WC2B 6DH, tel 0906/871-7777, fax 020/7539-7953. The city of Amsterdam now has two websites with cultural/municipal info: www.amsterdam.nl and www.visitamsterdam.nl.

Weather... Amsterdam has an ideal climate—for tulips. Winter is windy, icy, and damp; fall is cold, foggy, and damp; spring is rainy and damp; summer is brief but sticky. Rainy days average 237 per year. February and June are the dry months (17 days of rain on average). Average temperatures: January 36°F (2°C), February 37°F (3°C), March 41°F (5°C), April 46°F (8°C), May 54°F (12°C), June 59°F (15°C), July 62°F (17°C), August 62°F (17°C), September 57°F (14°C), October 51°F (11°C), November 43°F (6°C), December 38°F (3°C).

GENERAL INDEX

Aalsmeer Bloemenveiling, 168
Accommodations, 24–58. *See also* Accommodations Index
  breakfast, 27
  with business facilities, 35
  canal-house hotels, 26–27, 30
  cheap, 42
  convention hotels, 40
  family-friendly, 44
  gay and lesbian, 43
  map, 24–25
  nonsmoking rooms, 27
  party hotels, 43
  reservations, 27–28
  rooms with a view, 39
  near Schiphol Airport, 45
  with swimming pools, 41
Admirals, 241, 247
Age of consent, 21
A.H. Abels en Zoon, 178, 194
Airport, 255
Ajax, 240–241, 247
Albert Cuypmarkt, 176
Alcoholic drinks, 19–20
Alto Jazz Café, 215, 217, 222
American Book Center, 188, 194
Amstelkerk, 235, 247
Amstelkring Museum, 124, 146
Amstelpark, 161
Amstelpark Sportcentrum, 166
Amstel River, 111
Amsterdam (ship), 122
Amsterdam Arts Adventure, 259
Amsterdam Dance Workshop, 238
Amsterdam Diamond Center, 180, 194
Amsterdam Historical Museum, 121–122, 146
Amsterdamsebos, 161, 165
Amsterdamse Manege, 165–166
Amsterdam Tourist Office (VVV), 28, 232, 259, 266
Andries de Jong, 182–183, 194
Anne Frank House, 123, 146
Antiquariaat Brinkman, 189, 194
Antiques, 179, 186, 187
Antonia by Yvette, 181, 185, 194
April, 214, 222
ArenA, 236, 241, 247
Arena, 214, 216, 222
Art galleries, 185–186
Artis Planetarium, 236, 247
Artis Zoo, 130–131, 147
Artmarkt 't Spui, 177
Athenaeum Boekhandel, 189, 194–195
AUB Uitburo, 212, 232, 259
Aviflora, 178, 195

Babysitters, 256
Bachzaal, 234, 248
The Back Door, 214, 216, 222
Badhuis Theater de Bochel, 237, 239, 248
Ballet, 238
Bamboo Bar, 215, 217, 222
Bananenbar, 212, 223
Banks and exchange offices, 256
Bar Américain, 218, 223
Bars, 217–218
Bartolotti House, 121, 139, 147
Bavaria Pool-Snookercentrum, 132, 147
Beatrixpark, 160
Bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs), 40
Beer, 66
Begijnhof, 115, 117, 135, 147
Bellevue Theater, 238, 248
Beurs van Berlage, 119, 134, 147, 234, 248
Bijbels Museum, 133, 147
Bike City, 162
Bike thieves, 16–17
Biking, 15, 16, 126, 161–164
Bimhuis, 215, 217, 223
Bloemencorso (Flower Parade), 259
Bloemenmarkt (flower market), 115, 139, 149, 176
Blue Gold Fish, 183, 195
Boat tours and cruises, 127–128
Boekenmarkt, 176
Boekmanzaal, 135
Boerenmarkt, 176
Books, 176, 188–189
Boom Chicago Theater, 239, 248
Borneo, 164–165
Bosmuseum, 161
Bourbon Street, 215, 217, 223
Brandmeester's, 184, 195
Brilmuseum, 183, 195
Broek in Waterland, 163
Brown cafes, 66–68
Buiksloterwegveer (ferry), 135, 148, 163
Bulb vendors, 178–179
The Bulldog, 213, 217, 223
Business hours, 261–262

Café De Twee Zwaantjes, 212, 217, 223
Café Nol, 212, 217, 223
Cafes, 66–68, 87–89
  chess, 132–133
Café Saarein II, 20, 213, 224

Canal Bike docks, 165
Canal bikes (water bikes; *waterfiets* or *grachtenfiets*), 127, 130, 148
Canal Bus, 128, 148
Canal-house hotels, 26–27, 30
Canal Run (Echo Grachtenloop), 259
Carla V, 184, 195
Car rentals, 256–257
Carré Theater, 238, 248
Casa Rosso, 212, 224
Casino, 239
Centraal Station (CS), 266
Central Amsterdam
  accommodations, 29, 46–47
  dining and cafes, 90–91
  diversions, 142–143
  entertainment, 242–243
  nightlife, 220–221
  shopping, 190–191
Chess cafes, 132–133
Children
  accommodations, 44
  diversions, 129–131
  restaurants, 83–84
  shopping, 187
Chill Out, 181
Churches, 124–125
Church towers, 118–119
Civic Guards Gallery (Schuttersgalerij), 136, 155
Claes Claeszhofje, 138
Classical music, 233–235
Clogs, 189
Clubwear-House, 181, 195, 212
COC, 214, 215, 218, 224
Cockring, 214, 218, 224
Coffee and tea, 183
Comedy Cafe Amsterdam, 240, 248
Comedy clubs, 239–240
Concertgebouw, 234, 249
Consulates and embassies, 257
Cornelis Schuytstraat, 175, 184
Cosmic Theater, 237, 238, 249
Coster Diamonds, 181, 195
Cristofori, 235, 236, 249
Currency and currency exchange, 256, 257

The Dam, 113
Dance clubs, 214–215
Dance performances, 238
Dans Werkplaats Amsterdam, 238, 249
De Bijenkorf/Chill Out, 180, 182, 195–196
De Condomerie, 182, 184, 196
De Engelse Kerk (English Reformed Church), 235, 249
De Gooyer Windmill, 121, 149
De IJsbreker Muziekcentrum, 224, 235–236, 249
De Jager Country Shop, 182, 196
De Kaaskamer, 187, 196
De Keizer Snooker Club, 132, 148
De Klompenboer, 189, 196
De Looier Kunst & Antiekcentrum, 187, 196
De Mirandabad, 167–168
Department stores, 180
De Pinto House, 120, 137, 148
De Praktijk, 186, 196
De Rieker Windmill, 121, 148, 161
Dessing, René, 112
De Waag (The Weigh House), 125, 148
De Wallen, 11
Diamonds, 128, 174, 180–181
Dicky Squash, 166
Diversions, 108–169
  boat tours and cruises, 127–128
  chess cafes, 132–133
  churches, 124–125
  church towers, 118–119
  for culture vultures, 115–117
  free, 134–136
  historic buildings, 119–121
  history museums, 121–123
  for kids, 129–131
  maps, 108–109, 141–144
  must-see sights, 114–115
  orientation, 111–112
  people-watching, 131–132
  pool-table games, 132
  Red-Light District, 136–137
  tourist favorites, 113
Doctors and dentists, 257
Driving, 257–258
Drugs, 13
Duikelaar, 165, 168
Dutch Design by Godelief, 179, 182, 196

Eastern Amsterdam
  accommodations, 50
  dining and cafes, 94
  diversions, 141
  entertainment, 246
  nightlife, 219
East India House (Oost Indisch Huis), 120, 149
Echo Grachtenloop (Canal Run), 259
Edam, 164
Edgar Vos, 179, 182, 196
Electricity, 258
Elektrische Museumtramlijn (Tram Museum), 131, 156
Embassies, 257
Emergencies and police, 258
The English Bookshop, 189, 197
English Reformed Church (De Engelse Kerk), 235
Entertainment, 230–253. *See also* Nightlife
  info sources and tickets, 232–233
  maps, 230–231, 242–246
Erotic Museum, 129, 149

Escape, 214, 216, 217, 224
Evenaar, 189, 197
Ex Antiquiteiten, 186, 197
Exit, 214–215, 218, 222

Families with children
  accommodations, 44
  diversions, 129–131
  restaurants, 83–84
  shopping, 187
Fashions (clothing), 179, 181–182, 184
Felix Meritis (Shaffy Theater), 234–235, 250
Female & Partners, 184, 197
Ferries
  free, 135
  Historic Ferry, 131
Festivals and special events, 259–260
Finish Profiles Amsterdam, 241, 250
Flea markets, 177, 187
Flower market (Bloemenmarkt), 115, 139, 149, 176
Flower Parade (Bloemencorso), 259
Food, 64–66
Food stores, 187–188
Football (soccer), 167, 240–241
Frank, Anne, House, 123, 146
Frans Hals Museum (Haarlem), 140, 149
Frans Otten Stadion, 166
Frederic Rent A Bike, 162
Fringe entertainment, 239
Frozen Fountain, 183, 185, 197

Gables, 112–113
Galerie Binnen, 185, 186, 197
Galeriecomplex, 186, 197
Galerie de Expeditie, 186, 198
Galerie Fons Welters, 186, 198
Galerie Paul, 185
Galerie Paul Andriesse, 198
Galleria d'Arte Rinascimento, 189, 198
Gassan, 181, 189, 198
Gay and lesbian travelers, 20–21
  information sources, 260
  nightlife, 213–215, 218
Geels & Co., 183–184, 198
Gelateria Italiana Peppino, 67
GETTO, 20, 213, 224–225
Gezellig, 13
Gifts and souvenirs, 189
Gold Star Tennis, 166
Gone with the Wind, 183, 187, 198
Grachtengordel, 111
  accommodations, 29–30
Grant Café De Still, 217, 225
The Grasshopper, 213, 225
Greetings, 21
GWK (Grenswisselkantoor), 256

Haarlem, 139–140
Hals, Frans, Museum (Haarlem), 140, 149
The Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum, 129, 149
Havana's, 214, 225
Heineken Experience, 114, 115, 149–150
Herring, 11, 64–65, 71
Historic Ferry, 131, 150
Hofjes (courtyard housing complexes), 117–118, 137–138
Hofje Venetia, 138
Holidays, 260
Holland Casino, 239, 250
Holland Experience, 114, 150
Holland Festival, 233, 259
Holland Rent A Bike, 162
Hollandsche Schouwburg, 137, 150
Hollandse Manege, 166
Holland Tourist Information Office, 28
Holtkamp, 188, 198
Home design, 185
Homomonument, 139, 150
Horseback riding, 165–166
Hortus Botanicus, 137, 150, 160
Hotel Bookings, 28
Hotels, 24–58. *See also* Accommodations Index
  breakfast, 27
  with business facilities, 35
  canal-house hotels, 26–27, 30
  cheap, 42
  convention hotels, 40
  family-friendly, 44
  gay and lesbian, 43
  map, 24–25
  nonsmoking rooms, 27
  party hotels, 43
  reservations, 27–28
  rooms with a view, 39
  near Schiphol Airport, 45
  with swimming pools, 41
Houseboat Museum, 130, 150
House with the Heads (Huis met de Hoofden), 121, 139, 151
Housewives on Fire, 181, 199
Huis Marseille, 117, 139, 151, 186, 199
Huis met de Hoofden (House with the Heads), 121, 139, 151
Huyszitten Weduwenhof Karthuizerhof, 138

Ice-skating, 19, 167
IJsbreker Muziekcentrum, 215
IJ-Veer (ferry), 135, 136, 151, 163, 165
Indian restaurants, 72–73
In-line skating, 167
Internet access, 260–261
iT, 214, 216–218, 225
IVY, 179, 199

Kids
  accommodations, 44
  diversions, 129–131

restaurants, 83–84
shopping, 187

Jaap Edenbaan, 167
Jamaican flag, 14
Java, 164–165
Java-Borneo island development, 111, 164–165
Jazz, 215–216
Jemi Bloemsierkunst, 179, 182, 188, 199
Jenever (gin), 19
Jewish Historical Museum, 122, 137, 151
Jewish Memorial, 137, 151
Jewish Quarter, former, 111, 137
J.G. Beune, 187, 199
J.N. Andringa Tabaken, 188, 199
Jogging, 167
Jordaan, 111
accommodations, 30
Jordaan Festival, 260

Kadinsky, 213, 225
Keukenhof Garden, 168
Kinderboerderij De Dierencapel (Petting Zoo), 131, 154
Kindermuseum TM Junior, 130
Klein Trippenhuis, 120, 156
Kolthoorn Kunst, 179, 186, 199
Koninginnedag (Queen's Day), 259
Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra), 234, 250
Koninklijk Paleis (Royal Palace), 113, 114, 119, 155
Koot Light & Design, 185, 199
Koot Living, 185, 199–200
Kramer, 183, 187
Kromhout Shipyard Museum, 130, 151

Laddrak, 178–179, 189, 200
Language, 261
Leidseplein, 111, 113
Lindengrachtmarkt, 176
Loekie, 187, 200

Maarloopshofje, 138
Mac Bike, 162
McLennan's, 184, 200
Magere Brug (Skinny Bridge), 114–115
Magic mushrooms, 13, 14
Magna Plaza, 187, 200
Maloe Melo, 216, 225
Maritime Museum, 122, 129, 152
Marken, 164
Markets, 175–177
Mazzo, 214, 217, 225–226
Meals, 68–69
Mechanisch Speelgoed, 187, 200
Melkweg, 212–215, 217, 218, 226, 236, 238, 239, 250
Menno Kroon, 179, 200
Metric system, 263
Metz & Co., 119, 152, 180, 182, 200
M.M.C. Roozen, 178, 200–201
Molenmuseum (Mill Museum; Koog aan de Zaan), 169
Monne de Miranda, 128, 152
Monnickendam, 164
Monumentendag (National Monument Day), 259–260
More, 214, 216, 226
Mosquitoes, 18
Mulligan's, 218, 226
Multatuli Museum, 134, 152
Municipal Museum (Stedelijk Museum), 116–117, 127, 155
Museumboot (Museum Boat), 127, 128, 152
Music, 233–237
classical, 233–235
jazz, 215–216
Muziektheater, 135, 137, 152, 234, 237, 238, 250

National Monument Day (Monumentendag), 259–260
The Natural Health Company, 188, 201
Nederlands Kamerorkest (Netherlands Chamber Orchestra), 234, 251
Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest (Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra), 234, 251
Neighborhoods, map, 2–3
NEMO, 114, 119, 129, 153
Netherlands Chamber Orchestra (Nederlands Kamerorkest), 234, 251
Netherlands Film Museum, 131–132, 152
Netherlands National Ballet, 238, 251
Netherlands Opera, 237, 251
Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra (Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest), 234, 251
Netherlands Theater Institute Museum, 121, 139, 153
New Church (Nieuwe Kerk), 124, 153, 235, 251
New South, accommodations, 30
Newspapers, 261
Nieuwe Kerk (New Church), 124, 153, 235, 251
Nieuwendam, 163
Nieuwmarkt, 125, 176
Nightlife, 208–227. *See also* Entertainment
erotic shows, 212
gay and lesbian, 213–215, 218
information sources, 212
maps, 208–209, 219–221
smoking coffee shops, 211–213
Noorderkerk, 138, 153
Noordermarkt, 176, 187

OCCII, 239, 251
Old South, 111
  accommodations, 30
Oosterpark, 160–161, 167
Oost Indisch Huis (East India House), 120, 149
Opera, 237
Oude Hoogstraat 22, 115, 137
Oude Kerk (Old Church), 119, 124, 136, 153, 235, 251
Oude Kerkstoren, 135, 153
Outdoor activities, 160–169
  biking, 161–164
  canal bikes (water bikes; *waterfiets* or *grachtenfiets*), 127, 130, 148
  horseback riding, 165–166
  jogging and pickup sports, 167
  racquet sports, 166–167
  swimming, 167–168
  windmills, 169

Pakhuis Amsterdam, 119, 153, 164
Panara, 185, 201
Panc Vergouw, 201
Paradiso, 214, 217, 226, 236, 252
Paradox, 213, 226
Parking, 257, 258
Parks and gardens, 160–161, 168
P.C. Hooft (Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat), 175
Petting Zoo (Kinderboerderij De Dierencapel), 131, 154
P.G.C. Hajenius, 179–180, 188, 201
Pianola Museum, 134, 154
Pickpockets, 15
Pieter Cornelisz Hooftstraat (P.C. Hooft), 175
Pirates, 241, 252
Pontifex, 183
Pontifex/Kramer, 201
Pool-table games, 132
Portuguese Synagogue, 125, 137, 154
Post office, 262
Postzegelmarkt, 176–177
Premsela & Hamburger, 186, 201
Prostitution, 211

Queen's Day (Koninginnedag), 259

Racquet sports, 166–167
Radio stations, 263
Raepenhofje, 138
RAI, 241, 252
Rederij De Nederlanden, 128, 154
Red-Light District, 11, 29, 111, 136–137
Rembrandt House Museum, 123, 137, 154
Rembrandtplein, 111, 113
Reservations, accommodations, 27–28
Resistance Museum, 122, 154
Restaurants, 62–105. *See also* Restaurant Index
  alfresco, 86
  Asian, 73
  cafes, 66–68, 87–89
  celebrity chefs, 69–70
  cheap, 80
  dressing tips, 68
  Dutch, 70–71
  fish, 64–65, 82
  French, 75–76
  getting a good table, 69
  Indian, 72–73
  for kids, 83–84
  maps, 62–63
  meals, 68–69
  Mediterranean, 74–75
  nonsmoking sections, 14–15, 82–83
  post-theater, 83
  romantic, 80–81
  Thai, 73
  tourist traps, 81
  for vegetarians, 84–85
Rijksmuseum, 115–116, 123, 136, 155
Roller skating, 167
Ron's, 187, 201
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest), 234
Royal Palace (Koninklijk Paleis), 113, 114, 119, 155

St. Nicholas Parade/Santa Claus (Sinterklaas), 260
Sarphatipark, 160
Schiphol Airport, 255
  accommodations near, 45
Schreierstoren (The Tower of Tears), 125
Schuttersgalerij (Civic Guards Gallery), 136, 155
Sex Museum, 129, 155
Sex stores, 184–185
Sexual age of consent, 21
Shaffy Theater (Felix Meritis), 234–235
Shoebaloo, 181, 185, 201–202
Shoes, 185
Shopping, 172–204. *See also specific types of goods*
  bargains, 177
  best buys, 174
  hours of business, 178
  for kids, 187
  maps, 172–173, 190–193
  outdoor markets, 175–177
  zones for, 175
Sights and attractions. *See* Diversions
Silent Procession (Stille Omgang), 259
Simon Levelt Koffie & Thee, 183, 202
Singel 7, 110, 115, 139

Sinners in Heaven, 214, 216, 217, 226
Sint-Andrieshofje, 138
Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas Parade/ Santa Claus), 260
Size conversions, 263–264
Skinny Bridge (Magere Brug), 114–115
Smokiana, 188, 202
Smoking coffee shops, 13, 211–213
Soeterijn, 238
Soho, 214, 222
Southern Amsterdam
  accommodations, 48–49
  dining and cafes, 92–93
  diversions, 144–145
  entertainment, 244–245
  shopping, 192–193
Spectator sports, 240–241
Spinhuis, 118, 155
Squash, 166–167
Squash City Body Club, 166
Stad Amsterdam (ship), 122
Stadsschouwburg, 238, 252
Stedelijk Museum (Municipal Museum), 116–117, 127, 155
Stille Omgang (Silent Procession), 259
Stoeltie Diamonds, 181, 202
The Supperclub, 240, 252
Suykerhofje, 138
Swimming, 167–168
Swimming pools, hotels with, 41
Synagogue, Portuguese, 125, 137, 154

Take-A-Bike, 162
Tap houses, 68
Taxes, 264
Taxis, 264–265
Telephones, 265
Television stations, 263
Tennis, 166–167
Teylers Museum (Haarlem), 140, 155
Theater, 237
Theresia P.C., 179, 181, 202
Thorbecke Artmarkt, 177
Time, 216, 227
Tipping, 266
Tobacco stores, 188
Tolerance, Dutch sense of, 10–11
Torch, 186, 202
Torensluis, 139
Torture Museum, 129, 156
Tourist Tram, 131, 156
Trade Union Museum, 133, 134, 156
Train travel, 266
Tram Museum (Elektrische Museumtramlijn), 131, 156
Transformatorhuis Toneelgroep Amsterdam, 237, 252
Transportation, 17–18, 262–263
  to/from airport, 255
Trippenhuis, 120, 156
Tropeninstituut, 238
Tropeninstituut and Soeterijn, 253
Tropenmuseum and Kindermuseum, 130, 156
Trunk Interior Decorators, 182, 202
Tuschinski Theater, 236–237, 253

Van Brienen's Hofje, 138–139
Van Dam, 187, 203
Van Gogh Museum, 114, 116, 157
Van Loon Museum, 123, 157
Van Moppes, 113–114
Van Moppes Diamonds, 180, 203
Van Ravenstein, 184, 203
Van Wees, Cees, 175
VAT (value-added tax; BTW), 178, 264
Veemtheater, 238, 253
Vergouw, Panc, 179
Vero-Over, 184, 203
Visitor information, 266–267
V.O.F. Mathieu Hart, 186, 203
Volendam, 164
Vondelpark, 160, 166, 167, 236
Vrankrijk, 213, 215, 218, 227
Vrolijk, 20
Vroom & Dreesmann, 180, 203
VVV (Amsterdam Tourist Office), 28, 232, 259, 266

Waalse Kerk, 235, 253
Wasteland, 181, 184–185, 203, 212
Water bikes (canal bikes; *waterfiets* or *grachtenfiets*), 127, 130, 148
Waterloopleinmarkt, 177
Waterstone's, 189, 203
Weather, 267
Wertheim Park, 160–161
Westerdok, 111
Westergasfabriek, 215–217, 227, 236, 239, 253
Westerkerk (Western Church), 125, 139, 157, 235, 253
Westermarkt, 176
Western Islands, 111, 131
Westertoren, 118–119, 125, 135, 139, 157
Wijs & Zonen, 183, 204
Willet-Holthuysen Museum, 123–124, 133, 157
Windmills, 32, 121, 169
Wonen 2000 International Design Centrum, 185, 204

Xantippe, 20

Yab Yum, 211
You 2, 20, 213, 215, 218, 227

Zaanse Schans, 169
Zaans Museum, 169
Zeedijk 1, 115
Zeedijk street, 12
Zon's Hofje, 139

Zuiderbad, 167
Zuiderkerk, 124–125, 135, 137, 157
Zuidertoren (Southern Tower), 119, 124, 135, 137, 157

Accommodations

Acacia, 37, 39, 42, 51
Agora, 31, 51
Ambassade, 31–32, 35, 39, 40, 52
Amstel Inter-Continental Amsterdam, 33, 36, 39, 41, 52
Amsterdam Wiechmann, 31, 37, 52
Arena, 33, 37, 42, 43, 52
Bilderberg Hotel Jan Luyken, 35, 52–53
Blakes, 33, 37, 53
Bridge, 37, 42, 53
Bulldog Low Budget Hotel, 42, 43, 53
Canal House, 34, 39, 53
Crowne Plaza Amsterdam-American, 36–37, 53
De Filosoof, 34–35, 54
Estheréa, 31, 33, 35, 39, 41, 44, 54
Grand Sofitel Demeure Amsterdam, 26, 34, 35, 41, 54
Hegra, 31, 42, 54
Hotel de l'Europe, 34, 36, 39, 41, 54
Ibis Amsterdam Airport, 45, 55
Kabul Young Budget Hotel, 42, 43, 55
NH Barbizon Palace, 32, 35, 40, 44, 55
NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, 32, 33, 36, 45, 55
NH Schiller, 38, 55
Nr 40, 40, 55
Owl, 37, 44, 56
Radisson SAS Hotel Amsterdam, 35, 38, 56
Renaissance Amsterdam, 32, 35, 40, 44, 45, 56
Seven Bridges, 31, 39, 43, 56
Sheraton Amsterdam Airport, 41, 45, 56
Sheraton Hotel Pulitzer, 32, 38, 45, 57
't Hotel, 31, 33, 57
Toren, 31, 33, 35, 39, 57
Van Onna, 38, 42, 57
Van Ostade Bicycle Hotel, 38, 42, 57
Washington, 34, 57
Waterfront, 31, 58

Restaurants

Albatros Seafoodhouse, 82–83, 86, 95
Amsterdam, 78–79, 83, 84, 95
Bananarama, 73, 95
Blakes, 77, 78, 86, 96
Bojo, 72, 80, 83, 96
Bordewijk, 75, 79, 86, 96
Café Américain, 77, 79, 82, 83, 96
Café Chris, 87, 96, 132
Café Daalder, 88, 89, 96
Café Hegeraad, 87, 96
Café Luxembourg, 88, 89, 97
Café Mulder, 87, 97
Café Thijssen, 88, 97
Caruso, 74, 80, 97
Christophe, 75–76, 86, 97
Dantzig, 88, 89, 97
De Druif, 87, 97
De Engelbewaarder, 88, 98
De IJsbreker, 88, 89, 98
De Jaren, 88, 89, 98
De Karpershoek, 87, 98
De Kas, 75, 77, 78, 86, 98
De Roode Leeuw, 70, 79, 84, 98
De Silveren Spiegel, 76, 85, 98
De Sluyswacht, 87, 99
De Vrolijke Abrikoos, 82, 84, 99
In de Waag, 88, 100
In de Wildeman, 82, 100
Duende, 75, 99
D'Vijff Vlieghen (Five Flies), 70, 81, 83, 99
Gambit, 88, 99
Golden Temple, 82, 85, 99
Haesje Claes, 70, 80, 81, 83, 84, 99
Het Molenpad, 88, 89, 100
Hoppe, 87, 100
Kilimanjaro, 74, 100
L'Angoletto, 74, 84, 100
La Rive, 76, 79, 84, 86, 87, 100
Le Garage, 76–78, 83, 100
Le Pêcheur, 78, 80, 82, 83, 86, 101
L'Excelsior, 76, 79, 84, 85, 87, 101
Long Pura, 72, 77, 80, 101
Lucius, 77, 82, 83, 101
Memories of India, 72, 83, 101
Moko, 80–81, 86, 101
Pancake Bakery, 71, 80, 81, 84, 102
Papeneiland, 87, 89, 102
Piet de Leeuw Steakhouse, 71, 83, 102
Rakang Thai, 73, 79, 102
Royal Café de Kroon, 88, 102
Ruk & Pluk, 88, 102
Sahid Jaya, 72, 86, 102
Sama Sebo, 72, 78, 103
Schaak Café Het Hok, 88, 103, 133
Shiva, 73, 103
Tapas Bar Català, 75, 83, 103
Tempo Doeloe, 72, 80, 83, 85, 103
Tom Yam Fusion Cuisine, 78, 103
Traiterie Grekas, 75, 80, 104
't Smalle, 87, 104
Tujuh Maret, 72, 104
Van Altena, 71, 104
Van Dobben, 71, 80, 83, 84, 104
Vermeer, 76, 84, 85, 104
Vossius, 75, 78, 85, 104
Wagamama, 73, 82, 85, 105
Warung Marlon, 73, 80, 82, 105
Wildschut, 88, 105
Wilhelmina-Dok, 81, 86, 87, 105
Yoichi, 73, 105

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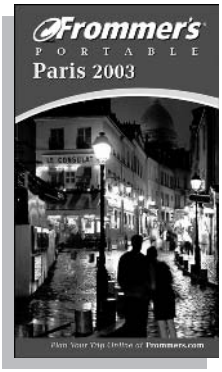

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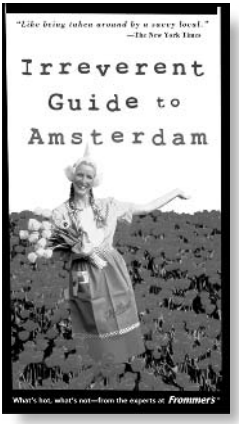
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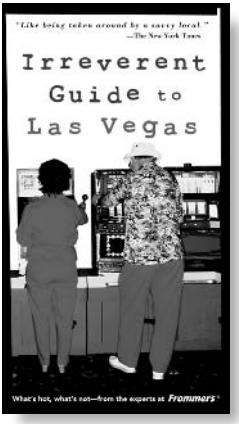
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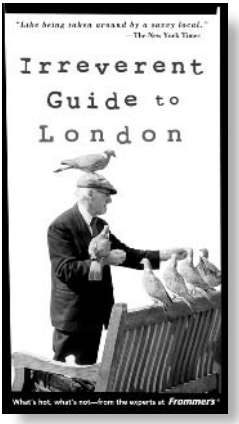
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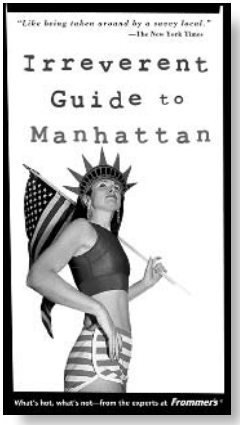
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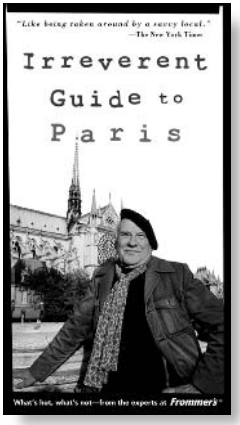
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